THE MERRY FIVE

BY PENN SHIRLEY

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"Mamma has found her lost baby."

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V. 2.

THE MERRY FIVE

BY

PENN SHIRLEY

AUTHOR OF "LITTLE MISS WEEZY" "LITTLE MISS WEEZY'S BROTHER" "LITTLE MISS WEEZY'S SISTER" "YOUNG MASTER KIRKE"

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The Merry Five

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R. M. B. Jan. 17/22.

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THE MERRY FIVE

CHAPTER I

THE MERRY FIVE

The Merry Five were Molly, Kirke, and Weezy Rowe, and their twin comrades, Paul and Pauline Bradstreet, who lived over the way. Paul, Pauline, and Molly were now fourteen years old, Kirke was twelve, and little Miss Weezy seven. The story begins with the Rowes at luncheon-time.

"O papa! I'm so glad we're going to the beach," cried Molly, laying down her fork.

"And I'm glad we're going to be so near Captain Bradstreet's camp," added Kirke, flourishing his napkin. "Oh! we shall have a famous outing."

"*Exquit!*" chirped Weezy, not at all sure what an outing might be, only that it must be something jolly.

"Me too, mamma," lisped Baby Donald, paddling with his spoon in his bowl of milk.

Mr. Rowe had caused this unusual excitement by reading aloud a letter from Mrs. Kitto, who kept a boarding-house at Santa Luzia. The letter stated that she had received Mr. Rowe's note of inquiry, and that if he desired it, she would take himself and family as boarders on the following Wednesday.

"You do desire it, papa; don't you?" added Molly eagerly.

"If your mamma does, my daughter."

"It will be difficult to leave so soon," remarked Mrs. Rowe, thoughtfully stroking Donald's restless fingers.

"But we children can help," said Molly quickly. "We have helped a great deal since vacation; now, haven't we, mamma?"

"Certainly you have, my dear," returned Mrs. Rowe with a smile. Did Molly remember that this vacation was as yet hardly two days old?

The first thing that Molly did after luncheon by way of helping, was to run across the street to Captain Bradstreet's to signal to Pauline in the cheery trill that all school-girls know.

"Mrs. Kitto can take us, Polly! We're going Wednesday!" she cried, as Pauline came dancing out, her long hair floating behind her like a black flag.

"You are, Molly? Papa says *we* sha'n't be off before the first of next month. But he has partly promised to let Paul and me stop at Santa Luzia on the way."

"O Pauline, how perfectly lovely!"

"I didn't believe he'd ever think of such a thing," said Pauline, braiding her hair. "He's so silly about us twins since mamma died. Can't bear to have us out of his sight."

"I don't wonder, Polly, I'm sure." Molly's eyes glowed with pity, as they always did when Pauline spoke of her dead mother. She longed to tell Pauline how sorry she was for her, but the words would not come. What she did say was only this, "Your shoe-string's untied, Polly, the right one."

"Is it? Well, it might as well be the right as the left. It's sure to be one or the other," returned easy-going Pauline, stooping to fasten the offending lacing.

"Oh! won't it be delightful if you and Paul can come to Santa Luzia, Polly? I hope you can stay at Mrs. Kitto's a whole week."

"Thank you, Molly dear, and I" — Pauline had been about to say that she hoped Molly and Kirke would stay at least that length of time at the camp; but suddenly remembered that there might not be room enough for them. She must ask her father.

"I — I suppose Auntie David will meet us

at Santa Luzia," she said, to finish the sentence.

"What does make you call her Auntie David, Pauline? You've never told me."

"Oh, Paul and I began to call her that when we were little snips, and we've done it ever since. Auntie doesn't mind. Her name is Davidson, you know. She married Uncle John Davidson."

"Will Mr. Davidson come to Santa Luzia too, Polly?"

"Oh, no; Uncle John has gone East. He goes East every summer on business, and then Auntie comes to live with us. Lucky for Paul and me; lucky for papa too! Auntie David is papa's only sister. I believe he thinks she made the world!"

"Well, I must skip back," said Molly, with an important air. "Kirke has gone over to Mrs. Carillo's to see if Manuel wants to keep Kirke's cart and burro while we're away;

and mamma may want me to do some errands."

All the rest of the week there was a pleasant bustle in the Rowe household, the bustle of preparing for a journey.

"We're going to ride in the cars," little Miss Weezy explained to all callers. "We're going to Sandy Luzia. It's 'most a hundred miles."

The little maiden was very busy these days; for she had to hunt up her scattered dolls, many of them having strayed out of sight.

Mr. Rowe, though still far from strong, was very busy too.

"I must drive over to the gardener's this morning to instruct him in regard to the hedge," he said to Mrs. Rowe the next Monday.

"Shall we shut up Zip?" asked Mrs. Rowe, as she brought her husband a glass of milk.

"No, my dear," Mr. Rowe smiled. "Let the little Mexican follow. I believe his dog-

ship thinks none of the family can be trusted anywhere without him."

As soon as Mr. Rowe had gone, Mrs. Rowe hastened to call Molly from the book she was reading.

"Come, Molly, while papa is away we will begin our packing. Please ask Hop Kee to take the largest trunk from the store-room, and set it down in the upper hall in front of the grate."

Molly put "Alice in Wonderland" upon the table with a little sigh, and walked out to the kitchen rather more slowly than a girl ought to walk when she goes on her mother's errands. She was thinking about Alice and that surprising rabbit. What *would* he do next?

"Now, children, you can collect the articles that you cannot do without," said Mrs. Rowe, after the trunk had been placed before the unused grate. "The necessary articles must

be put in first, for we sha'n't have room for everything you'd like."

Kirke immediately brought his tennis-racket, his foot-ball, and his jointed fishing-rod, and flung them into the trunk.

"I must have my tool-box, too, mamma, and the ship I'm rigging, and"—

"Any clothes, Kirke?" interrupted Molly mischievously, as she appeared with an armful of bathing-suits.

Kirke had not thought of clothes; and when these had been hunted up, and laid smoothly over the bathing-suits, he grudged them the space they occupied.

But his mamma did not let him remain idle.

"You may get the hammock next, Kirke, and papa's afghan and pillows."

Kirke skipped down-stairs two steps at a time, and speedily returned with the hammock slung over his shoulder, and bulging in a very peculiar manner.

"Here's a big hang-bird's nest, mamma. It has one wee bird in it. Do you want to see the fellow hop?"

"O Kirke! what made you bring Donald here now?" said Mrs. Rowe, with a vexed laugh, as Kirke spilled his baby brother at her feet.

Donald scrambled up, and rested his chin on the edge of the trunk to see his mamma put in the sofa-pillows, and spread blankets over them. "P'itty 'itty bed," said he.

"So you think that's a bed do you, little brother?" cried Kirke, much amused. "It does look like your cribby, that's a fact."

"P'itty 'itty *mamma*," pursued the young rogue, throwing his arms about his mother's neck, partly because he loved her, partly because he feared she was going to send him away.

"There, sweetheart, that will do," said she at last, between his kisses. "Mamma is busy

now. Brother must take little Donald downstairs."

"Pit-a-bat, pit-a-bat," pleaded the baby. He saw he must go, and, as that was the case, preferred to go in state, riding on his brother's back.

"Well, pick-a-back it is, then," exclaimed Kirke, slinging the teasing child across his shoulders. In the lower hall he met Captain Bradstreet and Pauline.

"You're the very young man I want to speak to," cried the cheery captain; "I want" —

"Now, papa, Kirke's not so *very* young, I'm sure," interrupted Pauline archly.

Captain Bradstreet chuckled as though his motherless daughter had made a witty remark.

"True, my little girl, Kirke's not so very young; but then, on the other hand, not so old as he may be later."

"I'm going on thirteen, Captain Bradstreet," said Kirke, jealous for his own dignity.

The captain chuckled again, and wiped his sunburned face so hard that Kirke half looked for a crimson stain on the white pocket-handkerchief.

"Yes, yes, to be sure, you'll overtake your father before long, Kirke. Hop Kee says your father's not at home."

"No; papa has gone to Mr. Gleason's, Captain Bradstreet."

"We've come, Pauline and I, to engage you and that big sister of yours to visit us at our camp when we're settled in it. Pauline won't sleep a wink till this thing's arranged. Can we see your mother?"

Kirke set Donald down upon the floor, and hastened to the upper hall, where Molly was capering about in the wildest excitement.

"O mamma! did you hear what Captain Bradstreet said? Did you hear? He wants Kirke and me to make a visit at his camp — I never made a visit at a camp in my life!"

"Yes, mamma," said Kirke, in the same low tone, "Captain Bradstreet wants to ask you if Molly and I can go. Came on purpose."

"O mamma! you'll say yes; won't you?" begged Molly.

Mrs. Rowe was hastily laying aside her apron.

"We'll ask papa, Molly. Captain Bradstreet is certainly very kind."

"*I* don't think Captain Bradstreet's kind — I don't think he's kind a bit," muttered little Miss Weezy, as the others went down-stairs. "Never 'vited me at all! Didn't I 'vite him to my seven-years-old party, ice-cream to it too? O dear, dear, dear!"

Unloading an apronful of dolls in a heap by the trunk, offended little Weezy stole down the back staircase into the garden to confide her sorrows to Ginger, Molly's yellow kitten.

"Captain Bradstreet said I was a nice, sweet little girl; he said it two times, he truly did.

And now he's gone and asked Kirke and Molly to go to his — to his something — oh, yes, he's asked them, and never asked me."

Ginger purred softly, and rubbed her head against her little mistress's feet; but Weezy could not be comforted. What a miserable old world it was to be sure, where captains called you nice, sweet little girls, and then went and didn't invite you to their — to their — she couldn't quite remember what.

Grown-up people liked big boys and girls like Kirke and Molly; they didn't like little ones like herself and Donald.

Poor little Donald, he was crying too. She heard him. What was he crying about? Weezy wondered. And where was he? He seemed a great way off, by the sound, 'most up in the sky. Why didn't somebody find him and make him happy?

CHAPTER II

DONALD HIDES

"WEEZY, Weezy, is Donald out there in the garden with you?"

This was Molly calling from the back porch.

"No, he isn't," answered Weezy, in a discouraged tone.

"He's screaming himself hoarse, Weezy, and we can't find him anywhere in the house."

"I haven't seen him." Weezy walked slowly toward her sister. "Has Captain Bradstreet gone, Molly?"

"Yes, Weezy, and Pauline."

"Did Captain Bradstreet say" —

"Maybe Donald followed Pauline and her

father home, Molly," suggested Mrs. Rowe from the doorway.

"No, mamma, I've been over to ask. I couldn't hear Donald on that side of the street, either. He must be in this house."

"Then, I'd like to know where, Molly," exclaimed Kirke, springing out upon the porch. "I've dived into all the wardrobes and under all the beds."

His face was crimson, and his hair on end like the spines of a sea-urchin. A cobweb dangled from his coat-sleeve.

"Have you looked in the sideboard, Kirke."

"No, I haven't, Molly; and I haven't looked in the salt-cellars."

"Oh, you funny boy!" tittered Weezy, who regarded the search as a protracted and rather diverting game of hide-and-go-seek.

Mrs. Rowe, on the contrary, was becoming seriously troubled.

"Where can the darling be, Molly?" she

cried, rushing back into the house, and hurrying from room to room. "I can hardly hear his voice now. How faint it has grown!"

"It is loudest here in the hall, mamma," said Molly, who had run ahead, and halted abruptly at the foot of the front stairway.

"Donny is up chimney, I guess," cried little Louise, dancing to the fireplace.

"Nonsense, Weezy; do you think he is a bat?" retorted Molly.

Kirke dropped on his knees before the hearth. He had been stuck in a chimney once himself, and the recollection always made his flesh creep.

"If Donald has crawled up this flue, Molly, it's no laughing matter, let me tell you."

"What *are* you talking about, Kirke? Donald couldn't crawl up that flue; it is altogether too small."

"I'm not so sure, Molly. Don can squeeze through a knothole."

"Donald, Donald darling," called Mrs. Rowe shrilly. "Where are you, Donald? Tell mamma."

A plaintive, muffled wail floated down the air.

"Tum, mamma, tum."

"Donald *is* in the chimney, mamma! Oh, I'm so afraid he *is* in here!" groaned Kirke, trying to gaze into the chimney's blackened throat.

But he only bumped his head against the andirons and twisted his neck for nothing.

"There are bricks in the way, mamma, stacks of them. I can't see a single thing."

"Tum, oh, tum!" cried the choked voice again; and this time they were sure it came from above them.

But did it actually proceed from the throat of the chimney? It was Mrs. Rowe who first thought of the unused grate in the

upper hall. Might not Donald have wedged his restless little body into that? He was constantly teasing to go up on the roof.

"Here I am, dearest, mamma is here," she called, mounting the staircase, the children at her heels, and stumbling across the clothing that strewed the floor.

Before the grate stood the large trunk she had been packing. She had left it open, and now it was closed; but she was too agitated to notice the change.

"Quick, Kirke, this trunk is in the way. Help me move it out from the grate."

Kirke laid hold of the handle nearest.

"What a heavy trunk, mamma! What makes" —

At that moment there was a stifled cry of "Mamma, mamma!"

Kirke jumped as if he had been shot, for the words seemed spoken directly in his ear.

"Donald's in the trunk," he roared, letting

go the handle. "The little monkey is in the trunk!"

"He's packed himself, Donny's packed himself!" shouted Weezy, hopping about on one foot. "What an ever-so-queer baby!"

Molly flew to the trunk, but it was fastened.

"Oh, this lock! This hateful, hateful spring-lock. Where *is* the key?"

"I left it in the lock. I know I left it in the lock," exclaimed Mrs. Rowe, groping hastily about the carpet. Help me, children, do help me find it!"

"Tum, mamma. Why don't oo tum?"

The voice was very low, oh, very, very low, little more than a sigh.

"Yes, yes, my baby; mamma will come."

Mrs. Rowe was yet hunting the key, and hunting to no purpose.

"Bring a hammer, Kirke," she cried hurriedly. "Bring a screw-driver — no, a chisel. Call Hop Kee."

It seemed centuries before Kirke returned with the tools; in reality it was only three minutes. Then Hop Kee came flying in as though fired from a sling or swung by his own long pigtail. Behind him appeared Captain Bradstreet and Pauline to learn if Donald had been found; and among them all the trunk was speedily opened.

Little Donald lay upon the pillows gasping for breath, and clasping in his chubby hand the missing key.

"Peepaboo, Donny! Peepaboo!" cried Weezy.

But the released prisoner did not answer. Mrs. Rowe caught the pale, limp little fellow to her breast with a sob of thanksgiving.

"Mamma is here, my baby. Did you think mamma never, never would come?"

The child snuggled close in her arms, too exhausted to utter a word.

"Look up, dearest; mamma has you!

Smile, mother's darling, mamma has found her lost baby."

"Yes, praise God! You've found your boy, Mrs. Rowe, and found him not one minute too soon," muttered Captain Bradstreet, throwing up the windows. "If he had not made himself heard, he might have shared the fate of Ginevra."

"Don't mention it, Captain Bradstreet," shuddered Mrs. Rowe. "The story of Ginevra flashed into my mind the moment I discovered where Donald was."

"Who was Ginevra, anyway, Molly?" asked Kirke, a little later.

The Captain and Pauline had gone, Mr. Rowe had come home, and the color was returning to Donald's cheeks.

"Oh! don't you know, Kirke? Why, Ginevra was that gay young bride, — Italian, I believe, — who ran off after her wedding, and hid herself in a chest."

"What did she do that for?"

"Why just for fun, to make the guests hunt for her. They were all playing hide-and-go-seek."

"Well, what next, Molly?"

"And the chest had a spring-lock."

"Oh! I see."

"Yes, the springiest kind of a spring-lock; and the poor little bride was no sooner inside the chest than the lid snapped down on her. There she had to stay; and she wasn't found for a hundred years?"

"A hundred years!" echoed Weezy, in dismay. "O Molly! didn't she have anything to eat for a whole hundred years?"

"I guess she didn't want anything to eat, Weezy," said Kirke, with a sly wink at Molly. "Not toward the last of it, anyway. I guess she had lost her appetite."

"O Kirke! you wretched boy," said Molly.

But Kirke's shocking sarcasm had been

quite lost on Weezy. She had picked up a box-cover from the floor, and was fanning Donald as he lay across his mother's lap. "Did you think that was a truly, *truly* little bed, Donald?"

Donald nodded drowsily.

"Babies shouldn't go to sleep in trunks. Oh, you droll, droll little brother!"

Weezy's remark had called up a painful memory, and Donald's lip began to quiver.

"Don't wike p'itty 'itty bed. All dark. Mamma all gone."

"We won't talk about it, darling," said Mrs. Rowe, kissing the tear-stained face. "Here you are in sister's arms, and sister shall sing to you. What do you want to hear her sing?"

"Sing Robbitty-bobbitty," replied Donald, swallowing a sob. And Weezy piped up in a clear, sweet treble: —

"Robinty-bobbinty bent his bow
To shoot a *pitcher* and killed a crow."

CHAPTER III

SANTA LUZIA

"HERE comes Miss Hobbs, mamma, rolling along with the clothes-basket."

Wednesday morning had arrived, and Kirke was upon the side porch helping his mother strap her grip-sack. Miss Hobbs was bringing home some starched clothes too fine to be laundered by Sing High, the "wash-man;" and beside her walked her roly-poly niece and nephew, Essie and Harry.

"I daren't leave them at 'ome by their little selves, Mrs. Rowe," she wheezed in mounting the steps. "Hessie is that contriving of mischief, an' such an obstinate child."

Essie hung her head, though not too low

to see the banana that Mrs. Rowe presently brought her.

"What do you say, Hessie? For shame! Can't you thank the lady?"

"Tank oo," mumbled Essie in the act of skinning the fruit with her sharp little teeth.

"That's a good gell, Hessie. You and 'Arry must heat your bananas 'ere on the porch while I carry in the clothes.

"If you'll believe it, Mrs. Rowe, that rogue of a Hessie ran away again yesterday," she continued, following Mrs. Rowe into the side hall. "A beastly race she led us. She tired 'Arry hall out."

"Harry looks delicate this summer," remarked Mrs. Rowe, as she began to sort the clothes into piles.

"'Arry's fat, Mrs. Rowe, but he isn't rugged. If I could lay 'ands on the gold I've buried I'd take him away for his 'ealth."

"Why can't Miss Hobbs get her gold, mamma?" whispered Weezy, coming in just then. "Can't Kirke and I dig it up for her?"

"Miss Hobbs means, dear, that she has spent her money for land that she cannot sell, and so she can't afford to take Harry into the country this summer."

"You'd better let him go to Santa Luzia with the Rowe family," laughed Kirke, as his mother gave him some garments to carry up-stairs. "Let him go, and I'll see to him."

"Thank you, Master Kirke," — Miss Hobbs's ample sides shook merrily, — "but while you're seeing to 'Arry who'll see to you?"

Kirke looked nettled, especially when she went on to say, "No, no, your ma'll have enough young folks to keep steady without 'aving my 'Arry."

Mrs. Rowe smiled thoughtfully at these jesting remarks. A fortnight at the beach

"You'd better let him go to Santa Luzia."

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would doubtless be a benefit to the ailing child. Could this be arranged? She must consider the question.

"We are all fond of Harry," she remarked, in handing Miss Hobbs the empty basket. "He's a good little boy."

"Oh, 'Arry's decent, Mrs. Rowe," responded Miss Hobbs, with a complacent glance at the hall clock.

"The clock is too fast, Miss Hobbs."

"Is she? I *thought* she must be quite a few minutes on; but we won't stay to hinder you." And Miss Hobbs tied her sunbonnet.

"You'll come around again this afternoon, Miss Hobbs, to close the house?"

"For certain, Mrs. Rowe. I'll close the 'ouse, and take charge of the key."

"Which key, Miss Hobbs? Hop Kee, or door-key?" asked Kirke, with mock innocence.

"Not Hop Kee, you may rely on that, Master Kirke," retorted Miss Hobbs, putting on her shawl as if it had been a bandage. "I wouldn't take charge of a Chinaman for all the teapots he could break."

"Hop Kee will work for the Bradstreets while we're away, Miss Hobbs."

"So there is where he's going. I knew the captain's housekeeper was sick."

"And when the family move into camp, they'll take Hop Kee along with them."

Captain Bradstreet's name had reminded Weezy of her old grievance.

"O Miss Hobbs! Captain Bradstreet has 'vited Kirke and Molly to go into that camp thing, and he hasn't ever 'vited me," she complained, holding the door ajar for Miss Hobbs to pass out. "I don't think it's fair."

"Never mind, little woman! You'll have your share of hinvitations before many years," — Miss Hobbs gave the others a wise look.

"I'm sorry to 'ave you all go; but I 'ope you'll 'ave a good summer, and I pray the Lord'll keep you well and 'appy."

"Oh! He will; He always does," answered little Miss Weezy for the family. "Good-by, Miss Hobbs."

After that Harry and Essie came in with sticky hands and faces to make their farewell speeches; and then their Aunt Ruth waddled homeward between them like a plump mother-duck between two plump ducklings.

They were met at the corner by a handsome, dark-eyed Spanish boy. It was Manuel Carillo, coming to take away Kirke's burro and cart to keep during vacation.

"You'll be good to Hoppity, this summer, won't you, Manuel?" said Kirke playfully, as he helped him harness the sleek gray burro into the trig gray cart. "You won't be mad with him because he threw you and broke your leg."

"Mad? Oh, no! that's all right."

Manuel grinned, and slapped the limb in question to show how strong it was.

"Hoppity ought to help you carry around your newspapers to pay for that bad trick of his. Now, oughtn't you, Hoppity?" said Kirke, giving the little beast a parting love-pat.

Kirke was glad to lend Manuel the burro. It seemed one way of making amends for the sad accident of the year before that had been caused partly by his own recklessness.

When Kirke returned to the house the family were sitting down to an early luncheon. Molly made room for him beside herself, saying cheerily, —

"Manuel drove by the window just now, smiling all over his face. How much he does think of you, Kirke!"

"I don't know about that, Molly, but he thinks a good deal of Hoppity. He'll have

a splendid time with the little trotter while we're away."

"Kirke has made many friends at Silver Gate City," remarked his mother. "Harry Hobbs for one." Then, turning to Mr. Rowe, she added, in a sprightly tone, — "Kirke proposes doing a little missionary work during vacation, papa. Have you any objection to his taking care of a 'fresh-air child' for a fortnight?"

"A 'fresh-air child,' my dear? I don't quite understand."

"Well, Harry Hobbs, for instance. Harry is in need of a change of scene. Do you approve his coming to Santa Luzia by and by?"

"O papa! I was only in fun," exclaimed Kirke in hot haste. "I don't want Harry to come; really and truly I don't. Paul and I have planned no end of good times there on the beach by ourselves."

"And you think Harry wouldn't enjoy those good times? Is that it, my son?"

"No, papa; Harry would enjoy them fast enough," Kirke laughed and blushed; "the bother is that Paul and I wouldn't enjoy *him*. The little kid would be frightfully in the way with his mud-pies, and his tagging, and his chattering. Don't you see, papa?"

"Then, Miss Hobbs dresses Harry so oddly, papa," added Molly, as her father did not reply. "She makes him look for all the world like one of Mr. Palmer Cox's brownies; and people at Santa Luzia wouldn't know but Harry was one of our family."

"What a shocking thought, Molly!" cried Mr. Rowe, vastly entertained by her expression of deep distress. "In the face of a danger like this it never will do for us to take Harry."

"You're laughing at me, papa; but you don't understand how girls feel about such things. Kirke doesn't understand, either."

"Girls have too many feelings, I think," said Kirke, not very politely. "They're always afraid of doing something queer."

"I wish boys were a little more like them, then," — Molly pushed back her plate with a saucy air, "boys never care a fig what is said of them."

"That's because they're independent, Molly."

"It's because they don't know what is proper, *I* say," retorted Molly between fun and earnest. "Why, I've seen boys that would walk into church with monkeys on their backs and never blush."

"I'm afraid Kirke will consider you rude, Molly," interposed her mother gently. "Aren't we wandering very far from Harry?"

"The farther the better," was Molly's secret comment, as Mrs. Rowe continued, —

"I hoped you children would want to do something nice for Harry. His aunt is not able to give him many pleasures."

"She gave him a *Caroline* cooky yesterday, mamma," put in Weezy; "full of seeds, it was. Harry let me bite."

"But, mamma, we *can't* take Harry with us," exclaimed Molly, elated by the sudden thought; "Miss Hobbs can't possibly get him ready in time for the train."

"As to that, Molly, she can send him next month by Captain Bradstreet."

"May be Mrs. Kitto won't have room for Harry," suggested Molly faintly.

Kirke dashed this hope to the ground. Harry, he affirmed, could be rolled into any corner like a foot-ball.

"The question is simply this, children," said Mrs. Rowe, buttering a biscuit for Donald to eat on the car; "will you devote a part of your vacation to your little neighbor, or will you spend the whole of it in amusing yourselves? You shall decide."

"O mamma! please don't leave it that way.

Don't put us on our honor," entreated Molly, with a shrug.

"Because, when you put us on our honor, we have to do a thing, even if we hate it like poison," added Kirke, groping under the sideboard for the yellow kitten.

Kitty's basket was ready, with a slice of roast beef at the bottom, and a smart blue bow on top; and now at the last moment Ginger had refused to be put in.

"Head her off, Molly. Shut the door, Weezy. Look out, Don, or I shall run over you!"

Kirke shouted his orders like a general in battle. Everybody jostled against everybody else, and Ginger was no sooner captured than the carriage came to take them all to the station. Then followed the excitement of the journey and of the arrival at Santa Luzia; and for several days nothing further was said about Harry Hobbs.

CHAPTER IV

LEARNING TO SWIM

THE children were delighted with the lovely little city of Santa Luzia, which lay upon the coast, snuggling in its arms a placid, sunny bay. For the first week after their arrival Weezy never tired of watching the sails on the water, and of counting how many she could see from her window at "The Old and New."

"The Old and New" was Mrs. Kitto's boarding-house, overlooking Santa Luzia Beach. The Old was the back part, built of brown adobe, with walls two feet thick; the New was the modern wooden front, with a breezy veranda stepping down toward the sea.

"The house puts its best foot forward,"

prattled Molly, as she and Kirke and Weezy set off one morning for a lesson in swimming.

"That's all right," replied Kirke, "if it keeps steady on its pins."

"I don't know what you're talking about," sniffed Weezy with disapproval. "Houses don't have feet; and they don't have pins."

"No, nor *soles* either, you precious snip of a goosie."

Kirke held his little sister's hand, swinging it to and fro as they walked together across the beach.

"Are you going to squeal to-day when you go into the water? The last time you scared the swimming-master half out of his wits."

"O Kirke, what a story!"

"I'll leave it to Molly if the man didn't duck."

"You silly, silly boy! You know he ducked on purpose."

Weezy flirted her sunny head in high dis-

dain, while Kirke and Molly exchanged amused glances.

"Do you think so, Weezy? Well, may be he did duck on purpose. I mean to try that ducking business myself this morning. Whatever you do, little sister, don't grab me around the neck; you might pull me under."

Kirke spoke in jest. He could already swim quite well, for he had learned the art a year or two before in the East. Molly and Weezy, on the contrary, had only taken three lessons.

"Hoh, Kirke! I couldn't pull you under. Of course not, 'cause you're *biggerer'n* I am," said Weezy, stopping to watch a small urchin scooping ovens in the sand.

He was a plump little boy in "brownie" overalls, which Molly insisted made him look like a fat, twisted doughnut.

"He looks like Harry Hobbs," responded Kirke, hurrying Weezy on towards the bath-house.

Molly felt a sudden twinge of conscience.

"That makes me think, Kirke, what shall we do about Harry? If he comes, he'll have to come next week with the Bradstreets. Mamma has left it to us, you know, to ask him or not, as we please."

Kirke whistled, and kicked aside a tangle of seaweed.

"Oh! we might as well invite the young Britisher, I suppose."

"But if Harry comes, Kirke, you and I'll each have to keep an eye on him to" —

"Yes, that'll be an eye apiece, Molly."

"To see that he doesn't get drowned or anything."

"Pooh, Miss Fidgetibus, who's going to drown him? You couldn't sink that dumpy boy any more'n you could sink the buoy on the rock yonder."

"I thought you didn't want Harry any more than I did, Kirke."

"Who says I do want him? Only I was thinking he could burrow here in all outdoors like a gopher; and it seems sort of mean, doesn't it, Molly, to shut down on the poor little kid?"

"I — don't — know."

Molly's glance had wandered from the sturdy young oven-builder to a group of well-dressed tourists climbing the long flight of steps to the bluff overhead. How mortifying it would be to take Harry about among people like those, and pose as his sister. Where *did* Miss Hobbs get the patterns of his clothes?

"The beach will make Harry weller, mamma says," observed Weezy, always ready to fill the pauses.

"*Better*, you mean, don't you, Weezy?" corrected Molly. "Mamma is always wanting to make somebody better."

"You're right, ma'am," Kirke nodded em-

phatically. "Mamma is kind, way through. She isn't much like you and me, Molly. Sometimes we're kind, and then again sometimes we're *kind of not.*"

"Thank you, sir; you can speak for yourself, if you please," retorted Molly, bridling.

She had secretly prided herself on being unselfish and warm-hearted, and this frank remark was wounding to her self-love.

"For my part, I'm willing to send for Harry," she added virtuously.

"So am I, Molly, — on a pinch," said Kirke. "And I suppose Pauline will bring him, — on a pinch!"

"Then, as soon as we get home to The Old and New, Kirke, we'll ask mamma to write to Miss Hobbs, and have it over with."

"Agreed. The Bradstreets will be here by next Thursday, won't they? Will they stay at The Old and New a week?"

"They'll stay till the captain and Hop

Kee get Camp Hilarious in running order," answered Molly, as they mounted the steps of the bath-house.

While Kirke presented their tickets at the office, she and Weezy waited in the main room. This had a large oblong bathing-tank in the centre, surrounded on its four sides by a broad walk. The dressing-rooms opened upon this walk, and the door of each one had painted on it near the top either a number or a letter of the alphabet.

"Which room would you like, Molly?" asked Kirke, quickly returning with the keys and their bathing-suits. "You can take 'H' or 'No. 7.'"

"No. 7; it is the larger," said Molly, drawing Weezy into that room, and locking the door.

Kirke vanished into "H," to reappear before No. 7 in precisely two minutes, clad in blue flannel, and calling, —

"What! Aren't you ready yet, girls?"

That was the fun of being a boy, and having no strings and no hooks and eyes to hinder him!

On emerging into the main room the children found their father seated there awaiting them. He had formed the habit of being present at their swimming-lessons.

"I feel safer to watch my ducklings," Molly heard him say to Mr. Tullis, the swimming-master, as she and Weezey drew near.

"Your daughters are learning fast, especially this little one," answered Mr. Tullis, looking at Weezy. "She'll soon swim like a fish."

Mr. Rowe patted Weezy's head, shining beneath her oiled-silk cap.

"She's a venturesome little lassie," he said. "She never seems to know what fear is."

"She'll make all the better swimmer for that, Mr. Rowe."

"Provided she doesn't take too great risks, Mr. Tullis. I've sometimes feared we ought not to let her go into the water."

"Anybody's liable to get into water, Mr. Rowe; the point is to know how to get out," replied the swimming-master lightly.

Molly and Kirke hardly heeded the remark at the time, but it rang in their ears afterward.

Mr. Tullis was already leading Weezy down the steps into the tank, which was divided across the middle by a low wall of stone. On one side of this wall the water was cold, but on the side they were entering it was agreeably warm; and Weezy was soon paddling about with great glee, supported under the chin by the strong hand of the swimming-master.

"Look, papa, see how well I can do it!" she cried, splashing and puffing like a young seal, till she was out of breath.

"You'd better rest a few minutes now, little girl," said Mr. Tullis.

And leaving Weezy clinging to a plank, he went to instruct Molly in swimming.

Meantime Kirke had been making ludicrous attempts to mount a hobby-horse, which, being mostly barrel, would rear and plunge as often as he tried to get astride its back. Finally, tired of these fruitless efforts, he climbed the staircase near by to coast down the toboggan slide with some other boys.

Mr. Rowe looked on as his son dashed down the slippery board again and again, and dived into the tank. Then he glanced at his more timid Molly, flushed with trying to strike out for herself, and at little Miss Weezy, floating gayly on her plank; and he mused, —

"What a blessing it is to be young and strong! I wish my children could appreciate this, and could know how happy they are."

And at that very moment Kirke and Molly were thinking, —

"Won't we have good times by and by, after Paul and Pauline have come?"

And little Miss Weezy was thinking; but she herself could hardly have told what she was thinking.

"Pauline and Molly were swinging in a hammock."

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CHAPTER V

AT THE BEACH

"I WONDER what you'll think of our camp, Molly."

Pauline and Molly were swinging in a hammock on the front veranda of The Old and New, chattering like spring chickadees.

The Bradstreets had arrived from Silver Gate City the previous evening, bringing Harry Hobbs with them; and Captain Bradstreet had gone on to the canyon that morning with Hop Kee.

"Papa has a wooden building up there, — sort of a shanty, where he stores the furniture every winter," went on Pauline. "It is near to Mr. Arnesten's cottage, and Mr. Arnesten sees to things when papa is away."

"Are the Arnestens all the neighbors you have, Pauline?"

"Yes, unless you count the Wassons. But the Wassons are three miles away, on papa's bee-ranch. We'll go to see them, Molly, when you're at the camp."

"Oh, that'll be delightful!" Molly pushed her heavy auburn hair away from her face, a habit of hers when things pleased her.

"Right after breakfast every morning, Molly, we'll put on our sunbonnets, — you can borrow auntie's, — and we'll march over to Mr. Arnesten's for the eggs, and see him feed the chickens. He has turkeys besides, and one proud old gobbler that struts about as if he owned all the gold mines of California."

"Didn't you say the Arnestens had a little girl, Pauline?"

"Yes, Olga, the old-fashionedest little soul! She has eyes just the color of a grindstone,

but her lashes are yellow, and her skin is yellow too. She used to trudge over with buttermilk last summer."

"Then the Arnestens have a cow?"

"I should say they do! It's always breaking into the garden and eating up the pease. We mind that, because Mr. Arnesten supplies us with vegetables."

"And with chickens too, I suppose, Polly?"

"Yes; Hop Kee cooks chickens beautifully."

"Doesn't he? It seems odd enough, Pauline, to think of your having our Chinaman."

"He came to our house in just the right time, Molly. Mrs. Cannon was so sick she couldn't have worked for us another day."

"Hop Kee is a diamond, Polly."

"A topaz, you mean, dear, a yellow topaz. How we shall hate to give him back to you!"

Molly snuggled her dimpled chin into her friend's neck.

"I wouldn't worry about that, Pauline. We sha'n't go home these two months."

"Neither shall we, I hope. Papa told me yesterday that we should stay in the canyon all during vacation. Then, if Uncle John isn't back from the East, auntie will go home with us to Silver Gate City."

"I'm just longing to see your Auntie David. Are you sure she'll come to-day, Pauline?"

"She wrote that she should come to-day, and spend a week here at The Old and New with Paul and me. Papa can take us all out to the camp together."

"Oh, dear, Polly! you won't be here but just seven days. And I haven't entertained you at all. What shall we do this afternoon? Shall we go to the bath-house?"

"I'd rather fish," answered Pauline promptly. "If there's anything I dote on, it's fishing."

"I want to fish," cried Harry Hobbs, from the corner of the veranda. "Can't I fish?"

The little newcomer was tired of stringing sea-shells with Weezy. Sewing was girls' work.

"Don't you and Weezy want to dig in the sand?" asked Molly, in her sweetest tones. "I'll find you the dearest little pails and shovels."

"I can dig at 'ome," responded Harry, with a grieved look. But he did not tease Molly. He had promised his Aunt Ruth that he wouldn't be troublesome.

"Oh! let him go fishing, Molly," said Pauline, stepping out of the hammock. "And let's ask the boys too. They'll take care of him."

"If they can leave their stilts, Pauline. They're stalking round the back yard like — like" —

"Like storks, of course," concluded Pauline, leaning over the veranda rail to see the lads better. "Come, boys, won't you go fishing?"

"Do you want to, Paul?" asked Kirke aside; for was not Paul his especial chum?

Paul nodded, and strode to the back porch in order to dismount on its high platform.

"Paul and I'll meet the rest of you at the wharf, Molly," called Kirke, already upon the ground. "You'll take the fishing-tackle, won't you? We'll bring the bait."

The bait was little crawfishes. The boys had to buy these of an old fisherman on the flats, who kept a supply of live ones in a pail covered with wet seaweed.

"It's fun to see Mr. Tarbox catch the crawfish," said Paul, when they were near the fish-house. "I saw him do it last summer."

"How does he go to work?"

"Oh! he treads a circle about six feet across in the mud. Pretty soon the water soaks into this ring, and the little crawfish 'll crawl in. All Mr. Tarbox has to do is to scoop them up."

"That's why he can afford to sell them cheap," said Kirke.

"But he asks more in the winter," said Paul.

Kirke bought two dozen crawfish for a nickel; and he and Paul carried them back to the beach, where the girls and Harry were waiting.

After the hooks had been baited, the three boys and the three girls walked out upon the wharf, Molly holding Harry by the hand. He was a clumsy little fellow, and she was afraid he might fall over the edge. She had no such fear for nimble-footed Weezy. Then they threw in their lines, and waited and waited, while the sun grew hotter and hotter. They waited in vain. Nobody had a nibble.

At last Pauline reeled in her line with a petulant motion.

"Supposing we give up fishing, and go around Bird Rocks to hunt for abalones."

"A good idea," said Paul. "The tide is low, and maybe we can find abalones enough for a soup to-morrow."

"A soup, indeed! *Will* you hear the boy?" cried lively Pauline. "Paul thinks only of soup, and not at all of the beauty of the shells."

"I'd rather have one large abalone shell than forty herrings," said Molly, escorting Harry to the mainland.

"Especially than forty herrings that won't be caught," added Kirke, dropping his tackle into the basket. "Perhaps we shall have better luck after the tide begins to come in."

"I shouldn't wonder. We'll try again later," said Pauline, lingering at the end of the wharf while Kirke concealed the basket beneath it.

Then the two hastened forward to overtake Paul and Molly, who had set out for the rocky cave beyond Bird Rocks. Weezy and Harry lagged behind the others, Harry's short fat

legs being already weary of ploughing through the sand.

Weezy was very polite to her little guest, and very proud to show him the wonders of Santa Luzia, which she seemed to regard as the especial property of herself and her family.

"This is one of our owl shells," said she presently, bringing Harry a limpet shell about as large as the palm of her hand.

Harry eyed it sharply.

"Where's the *howl?*"

"On the inside. Don't you see, Harry?"

"That? That isn't a *howl.* It hasn't any 'ead, Weezy."

"Why, yes, it has, Harry. I think it has a good head, a very good head indeed."

What did Harry mean by finding fault with her lovely shell? For a moment Weezy was too vexed to remember that he was her company.

By this time the others had passed beyond the ledge which shut off the beach from the rocky cove, and Harry and Weezy were alone on the sandy shore. Before them was the ocean, behind them the high bluff, climbed by a wooden stairway. Near the foot of this stairway stood the wharf where the children had just been fishing.

Weezy looked back at the wharf regretfully. She wished that she had stayed there, instead of walking on the tiresome beach with a little boy only six years old, — a tiny boy that didn't like her owl shells!

Why shouldn't she go back now to the wharf? Nobody had said she mustn't; and if she should go that minute nobody *could* say it, because there was nobody to see her. She would catch a big herring all her own self, that she would, and make everybody stare.

Weezy's eyes sparkled like the waves in

the sunlight, her cheeks glowed like the beach pea-blossoms at her feet.

"I'm going to fish, Harry. You can come if you want to," said she, turning briskly on her heel.

She wore that day a cap and dress of navy blue trimmed with bands of gilt braid. Harry was dressed in brown, and as he bobbed along behind her he resembled a dorbug chasing a butterfly.

"Here's a hook with a baby crawfish on it, Harry. *You* may have that," she said, with an excited air.

Then, having selected a second baited hook for herself, she skipped along the wharf, swinging her line. This was something worth while, to fish on her own account, without Molly or Kirke at her elbow to cry out, —

"Take care, Weezy, don't stick the hook into you. Take care, Weezy, don't fall over-

board." She hated "don'ts." She was vexed now to hear Harry calling out, yards behind her, —

"*Don't* go so fast, Weezy, I'm hawful scared!"

He had reached a broad crack that yawned between the planks, and there he stood trembling till Weezy danced back to him.

"O Harry, before I'd be such a baby! Come along, I'll lead you."

But once having seen the waves tossing beneath that dreadful crack, Harry could not be persuaded to cross it; and much against her will Weezy staid beside him, and fished near the shore.

"You can hold on to the post, Harry," she said generously. "I don't want it, I'm not afraid."

Harry held on like a barnacle while Weezy sat on the edge of the wharf, dangling her

feet, and moving her line slowly up and down in the way she had seen fishermen do.

The beach was unusually deserted that afternoon, because of a railway excursion which had attracted many people to the neighboring city. Weezy, sitting and gazing down into the restless green water, while she waited in vain for a nibble, began to grow sleepy. Suddenly Harry shouted boisterously, —

"I've caught a fish, Weezy! Oh, oh! I've caught a fish!"

Weezy was at once broad awake.

"Have you, Harry? Oh, have you? Let me pull him in."

She spoke a second too late. Harry had given the line a quick jerk toward her, and the next thing she knew a wriggling sculpin was flapping its slimy scales right in her face.

"Ugh! Ugh! Take it away, Harry!"

she cried, dropping her own line, and beating the fish back with both hands. "Oh, take the horrid" —

She never finished the sentence. At the last word she lost her balance, and toppled headlong into the ocean.

CHAPTER VI

FISHING FOR WEEZY

WEEZY'S fall had been to Harry like the rushing of a meteor across the sky. He had seen a swiftly moving mass of gilt and blue dart past him and vanish, and the next thing he knew he was standing alone upon the wharf.

For a moment he was too dazed to move; then he scampered madly to the shore, trailing the sculpin after him.

"Weezy's tumbled! Weezy's tumbled into the water," he shrieked, running toward The Old and New as fast as he could run.

The more direct way was by the one hundred steps which led to the bluff; but Harry never thought of the steps, he toiled around

by the carriage-road. Twice he tripped, and measured his short length in the sand; but fortunately his screams went on ahead of him, and reached Mrs. Rowe up-stairs in her room.

"Are you hurt, Harry? What is it?" she cried, hastening to the brow of the hill.

"Come, oh, please come!" sobbed the terrified little fellow. "She's in it. Oh, she's in it!"

"Who's in it? In what, Harry?"

"Weezy, Weezy's in it — in the ocean! I didn't push her in!"

"Where, Harry? Show me."

"She tumbled in, she tumbled in her own self."

Mrs. Rowe had seized the child's hand, and was dragging him back to the beach. Behind him still trailed the forgotten sculpin, now dead as a door-nail.

"Help! help!" shrieked Mrs. Rowe, as she pressed on.

She was trembling all over. She dared not ask another question. A man hauling seaweed from the shore left his horses standing in the middle of the highway, and turned back with her.

Ah, the long, long hill! Should they never, never reach the foot of it? Midway Harry tripped again and fell.

Mrs. Rowe rushed forward alone. She had caught a glimpse of a small object floating near the beach. It was Weezy's cap riding the waves like a little skiff. Yes, certainly it was Weezy's cap, — the blue cap with gilt bands; but, alas! alas! where was the little girl who so lately had worn it? Where, oh, where was Weezy herself?

Not to pain you needlessly, my little readers, I will tell you in confidence that Weezy was out of the water, safe and well. But how could poor Mrs. Rowe know this? She only knew that her darling was not with

the four other children now returning from Rocky Cove, and she called distractedly to Harry, —

"Show me just where Weezy fell in."

"Hoff there," — he pointed at random along the pier, — "hoff there, by the post."

"Which post, my boy?" cried the ranchman. "There are forty or fifty posts."

Harry grew confused; he could not answer.

"I'll row out a piece," said the man, hurriedly untying a punt moored to the beach.

"Why didn't I call Edward! Oh, if Edward were here!" moaned Mrs. Rowe, rushing upon the wharf, and peering over the side.

"There isn't any kelp to hinder my seeing to the bottom, ma'am," cried the ranchman from the boat below.

Mrs. Rowe wrung her hands. "O Weezy, Weezy, my dear little daughter!"

"If I only knew just where she slipped in, I'd dive for her," called the pitying voice from beneath. "I'd get her for you if I could, ma'am."

Meanwhile little Miss Weezy, the unconscious cause of all this anguish and commotion, lay half asleep upon the neighboring bluff behind some tall tufts of alfalfa.

She had scrambled out of the ocean almost as quickly as she had fallen in. Then she had started to run home, but, at the top of the one hundred steps, had become giddy and sunk down to rest. Oh, she was so tired, so very, very tired! And it was so nice and warm on the bluff. To go on to The Old and New seemed too great an effort; it was easier to lie still in the sunshine. Besides, didn't she want to dry her wet clothes? What would mamma say to her because she had spoiled her pretty dress? By and by she opened her eyes

and blinked at the wharf below. She saw her mother rushing up and down the planks, she saw the teamster pushing off from shore.

"Wonder what makes mamma act so funny? Wonder what that man's doing with the boat?" she thought drowsily. But she was too languid really to care; and in the act of wondering again closed her eyes.

She did not see Kirke race to the pier to learn what was the matter; she did not hear her mamma cry, —

"Oh, Kirke, Kirke, your little sister's in the ocean!"

But when Kirke took in the full meaning of his mother's words and shouted, half beside himself, —

"O Molly, O Paul, Weezy's drowning! Weezy's drowning in the ocean!" then Weezy sprang to her feet wide awake, —

"O Kirke Rowe, that's a fib, that's a dreadful fib!" she cried, whirling about, and

waving her arms like an excited windmill. "I'm not drowned one bit! Why, see me, here I am, right here!"

I wish you could have heard the shout that answered her from the shore. I wish you could have seen the sudden rush from the wharf, and the dash up those wooden steps!

Regardless of salt and sand, Mrs. Rowe clasped her dripping child to her breast, and then passed her about like some choice relic to be kissed and adored.

"You did fall in the *hocean* though, Weezy; I saw you!" cried Harry, evidently bent on clearing himself from any suspicion of having lied.

Weezy turned to her mother with a most contrite air, —

"I didn't mean to, mamma, truly I didn't! That wiggly old fish jumped at me and knocked me off!"

"Bless my sweet little girlie!" exclaimed

Mrs. Rowe, taking the child again in her arms, "did you think mamma was going to scold you?"

Weezy looked very happy. In place of the chiding she had expected for losing her cap and soiling her gown, she had received hugs and kisses. The reason for this strange state of things she did not in the least understand; but she knew that she liked it. That she had been in danger of drowning never once occurred to her.

"Walk as fast as you can, darling" cried her mamma, leading her on toward the boarding-house. "You must have a hot bath and a good rubbing at once, or you'll take cold."

"My shoes go *quish, quish,* every step I take," complained Weezy, pressing forward with lagging feet.

"Wait, we'll carry you, Weezy. Kirke and I will make a queen's chair and carry you," exclaimed Paul.

"The boys bore the child onward."

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"To be sure we will, little water-soaked girl; why didn't I think of it?" returned Kirke, wheeling about to clasp hands with his comrade.

Mrs. Rowe lifted Weezy into the seat thus formed, and the boys bore the child onward. The others followed.

"This doesn't look much like Weezy's hair, does it, Pauline?" said Molly, wringing the moist locks that straggled down her little sister's back. "It looks more like seaweed than hair."

"Or more like wet sewing-silk, Molly. Not a speck of curl in it."

"You must have gone to the very bottom, Weezy," said Kirke tremulously, as they neared The Old and New. "How on earth did you manage to paddle out?"

"Oh, when I came up, you know, I just climbed into the punt."

"The punt! Why, the punt was ever so

far from the shore, Weezy," interrupted Molly. "I remember 'twas tied by a long rope."

"Yes, pretty long," said Weezy.

"Then how did you get from the boat to the beach, Weezy, so far off?" persisted Kirke.

"Oh, *that* was as easy as pie," said Weezy, highly flattered at finding herself the object of so much interest. "I just took hold of the rope, you see."

"Do you mean to say, Weezy, that you slid from the bow of the boat into the water, and then worked yourself ashore by that rope?"

"Yes; why not, Kirke? The rope was right there."

"She has no idea she did anything remarkable," exclaimed Molly in Kirke's ear. "Just think what might have happened! We ought to have kept those children in sight every minute."

Kirke nodded penitently.

"That's so; but Weezy would have done well enough if Harry hadn't been there. Why did we bring him?" he whispered. Then aloud, "I can't imagine now how the little witch got to land. It isn't as if she had actually learned to swim."

"Oh, I pinched the rope, and kind of jiggled along," explained Weezy coolly; "that wasn't anything."

"No, of course it wasn't anything," said Paul and Pauline in chorus, clapping their hands and laughing.

But the drenched little girl who had performed so grandly on the tight rope was growing more exhausted now with every step she took; and the moment she entered the house was glad to be undressed, and put to bed like a baby.

When it was the hour for the train the other children left her sleeping, and stole off to the station together to meet "Auntie David."

Harry trudged behind, hugging Weezy's damp cap, which had been rescued from the billows.

"Little John Bull has nothing to say," remarked Kirke to Pauline, who walked beside him. "I think he misses Weezy."

"We all miss her," responded Pauline, with a glance over her shoulder. "Harry makes up the number five; but he doesn't take Weezy's place in the least. Without Weezy we can't be 'The Merry Five.'"

CHAPTER VII

GOING INTO CAMP

THE children met Mrs. Davidson at the station as they had expected.

She was a cheery little woman, with a delicate pink skin and soft light brown hair, so full of waves that Pauline sportively declared that it made her seasick to look at it.

Paul and Pauline were very fond of this aunt, and found it one of the greatest attractions of their camp-life that she usually spent her summers with them.

"And the best of it is, Molly, that Auntie David loves us just as well as we love her," chatted Pauline, the last morning of her stay at Santa Luzia.

The two girls were pacing arm-in-arm up

and down the veranda, waiting for Captain Bradstreet to drive around with the buckboard in which he was to take his family to the canyon.

"I think your Auntie David is perfectly lovely, Polly."

"Do you, really? Oh, I'm so glad! She likes you too, Molly. She hopes you'll come out often to the camp."

"Does she? The dear, how nice of her!"

"Yes; she says you're a reliable girl, Molly. She never said as much of her own niece! and, — ahem! — she believes you have a good influence over me!"

Pauline drawled out the last sentence with a droll pucker of the lips which threw Molly into spasms of laughter.

"The blessed woman! She didn't say that, Pauline? You don't mean to tell me that your Auntie David said that!"

"Yes, those very words, Molly, to papa.

And papa, the old darling, whipped out his pocket-handkerchief, wiped his eyes, and muttered, 'I've noticed that myself.'"

"Now, Pauline!"

"Oh! papa is forever holding you up to me for an example, Molly. I wonder I don't hate you."

"The idea of setting me up for an example for anybody, Polly, — me, a girl with a red-haired temper."

"Oh, hush, Molly! Your hair isn't red!"

"It used to be when I was a little midget, — a real cayenne-pepper color, and I had a peppery temper to match."

"What has become of it, then, Molly?"

"Of my hair, do you mean? That has cooled off, but my temper" —

"The stage is ready," shouted Captain Bradstreet, reining his prancing horses around the corner of The Old and New. "Call your aunt, Pauline."

Weezy, still a trifle pale, ran out upon the veranda with Harry to witness the departure. Paul and Kirke raced up from the beach. Mrs. Davidson came down from her room, and mounted with Pauline to the back seat of the buckboard; Paul jumped in at the front beside his father, quick good-bys were exchanged, and away dashed the lively horses on the road to the canyon.

"Thursday, remember we shall expect you next Thursday, all three of you," cried the twins, looking backward.

"All three of you, of course," echoed their father, in tones loud enough to have been heard at sea. "We want *all* of you, especially little Miss Weezy."

Weezy darted into the house, about the happiest little girl in California, shouting, —

"He *did* 'vite me, mamma! Captain Bradstreet *did* 'vite me. He 'vited me *officially!* Oh! please may I go?"

"We'll see, dear," answered her mother, with a smile that meant "yes"; "we'll see how kind and polite you are to Harry for the rest of his stay."

Mrs. Rowe had suspected all along that the good captain had intended to include Weezy in the invitation, but had forgotten to mention the child by name. Grown people are careless sometimes, and forget that little children have been slighted. The children themselves do not forget — ah, no!

Harry remained at Santa Luzia one week longer, and the members of the family vied with one another in making him happy. Mr. Rowe bought him a new suit, which delighted Molly as much as it did Harry; Kirke caught horned toads, and dug up trap-door spiders' nests for the lad's amusement; while little Miss Weezy loaded him with shells and sand-dollars till his new pockets were in danger of bursting. By the end of

his fortnight at The Old and New they had all grown fond of the frank little fellow, as we are apt to grow fond of those whom we try to make happy. When he was put on the train in care of the conductor, Weezy cried, and even Molly looked tearful.

"We shall miss the little scamp, Molly," said Kirke, as they walked home from the station; "but I must confess I'm tired of playing watch-dog for him."

"Yes, so am I, Kirke," Molly drew a long breath; "I'm glad we asked him to come, though. Mamma thinks the visit has helped him ever so much."

"Does she? Well, I'm glad. But do you know, Molly, this morning I was afraid it would rain, and the kid would have to stay over? If he had stayed, it would have bothered us to-morrow about going to the camp."

Kirke blew off some of his surplus energy

in a prolonged whistle, the near prospect of this much desired outing being very exciting.

But, sad to relate, when the children went down to breakfast the next morning, yesterday's light mist was woven into a thick curtain of fog, which shut out the sun, the ocean, and even the hedge that bordered the lawn. Molly opened the front door, and immediately closed it with a shiver.

"O Kirke! out-of-doors it's like a vapor bath. Do you suppose papa can take us to the canyon?"

"Papa must take us; papa promised!" exclaimed Weezy, her eyes watering as if the fog had condensed in them.

"But you know it never will do for papa to get cold, Weezy," returned Molly, herself ready to cry. "If it isn't pleasant to-day, we can go when it clears off. Wasn't it nice in Captain Bradstreet to ask us to stay a long while?"

"Oh! the fog will lift by and by, Molly. Here in California mist doesn't mean rain," said hopeful Kirke.

For once he was a true prophet. By ten o'clock the sun had pierced the clouds; and by eleven the little party set forth in a beach wagon, attended by Zip, Donald's hairless Mexican dog. Turning their backs upon the blue ocean, they drove across the parched *mesa*, descended a steep hill, and found themselves at the lower end of Sylvan Canyon. Here the grass was still tender and juicy, watered by a lazy brook flowing between dwarf forests of fern. Molly clapped her hands.

"How pretty it is, papa! so green and so tree-y!"

"The trees are mostly live-oaks and sycamores," replied her father, who had driven over the road the week before with Captain Bradstreet. "Look out for the branches, or you'll lose your caps."

"I'd like to lose mine," responded Weezy rather fretfully. "It pinches, and it's all crumpled up."

"Oh! never mind, little sister," — Molly brushed some grains of sand from the visor; "the cap is plenty good enough for the woods."

Here Zip began to bark and whine around the wagon; and before anybody could tell what he wanted he had jumped in, trembling like a leaf.

"He's afraid of those dogs," said Molly, the next moment, as a pack of hounds came running toward them, followed by a man in a rough hunting-suit.

"No wonder he's afraid," exclaimed Kirke, rapidly counting. "One, two, three, — eight big creatures! And the smallest of them could eat Zip at a mouthful."

"Their master is Kit Carson's son," observed Mr. Rowe, when they had passed the

strange procession. "He lives in that hut behind the willows."

"Does Cat Carson live with him, papa?" asked Weezy.

"No, little daughter; Kit Carson died years ago, but he was a famous scout in his day."

"What is a *cout*, papa?"

"A scout, Weezy, is a man sent before an army to spy out danger."

"Oh! is that all?" yawned Weezy, tired of the subject.

"Kit Carson led General Frémont through to the Pacific Ocean, didn't he, papa?" asked Kirke.

"Yes, my son, when the country was an unexplored wilderness."

While they talked, the road had been running about among the trees in an inquisitive way, as if it were hunting for birds' nests; and now it crossed a small clearing where there was a brown cottage.

"This is Mr. Arnesten's ranch," said Mr. Rowe, drawing the reins.

"I see the camp, I see it!" cried Kirke, standing up in the wagon. "There are three — yes, *four* — tents, and a shed besides."

"Hop Kee sleeps in the shed," said Mr. Rowe. "Ah, here comes Mr. Arnesten from the spring. Good-morning, Mr. Arnesten. Can you bring back my horses from the camp and feed them?"

The Swede nodded respectfully, and having set down his two pails of water, plodded along in his clumsy shoes behind the party.

"Look, Weezy, they've carried the table out-of-doors under the live-oaks," exclaimed Molly, holding Zip by the collar. "We shall have a regular gypsy dinner."

"I hope dinner is ready," said Weezy, in a flutter of expectancy. "I'm 'most starved."

Molly was gazing about her with an air of keen disappointment.

"Where can Paul and Pauline be, Kirke? I thought they'd be looking out for us."

"And aren't we looking? and haven't we been looking for an hour?" cried two gay voices on the right, as the twins sprang from behind the tall sycamore that had concealed them.

Then they started three cheers for "The Merry Five," in which their young visitors most lustily joined.

"Ship ahoy! Cast your anchor!" called genial Captain Bradstreet, drawn from his tent by the joyful tumult.

Auntie David hurried after to shake hands with the newcomers, and bid them welcome to the camp. All were talking and laughing together, and making so pleasant a din that the sleepy old owl at the top of the sycamore actually winked at them, and cocked his head on one side to listen.

"The twins sprang from behind the tall sycamore."

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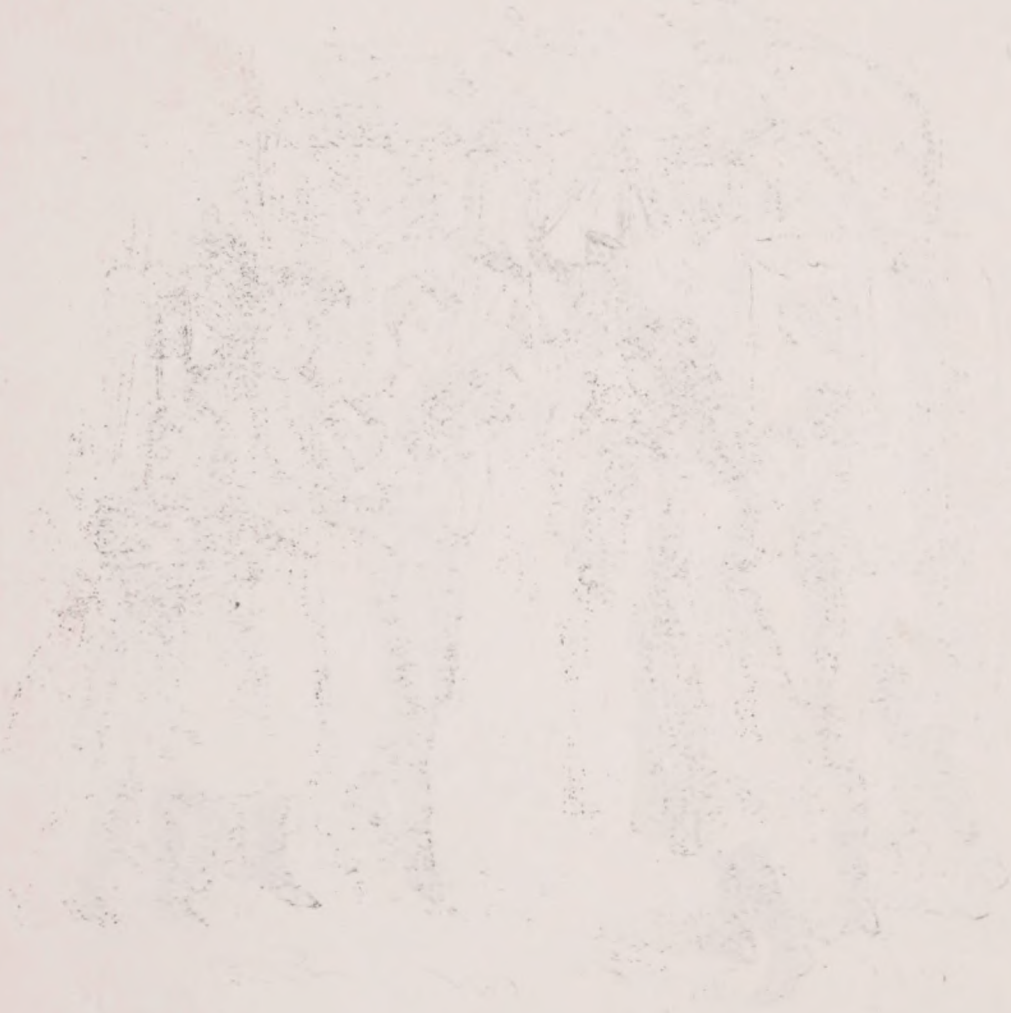

CHAPTER VIII

THE LITTLE MINERS

PAULINE raised the green mosquito-netting that screened the door of the largest tent, and courtesied demurely to her visitors.

"'Will you walk into my parlor?'"

"Thank you, Mrs. Fly," said Molly, "'Tis the prettiest little parlor that ever I did spy.'"

The canvas room was indeed very attractive, as well as comfortable. It had a board floor carpeted with rugs, and it boasted a lounge and a table and several rocking-chairs.

"You and Weezy are going to sleep with Auntie David and me in the little room behind those, Molly," said Pauline hospi-

tably, pointing to a pair of gaudy blankets curtaining off the farther end of the tent. "Papa bought those blankets of the Navajo Indians. Aren't they gay?"

"Who, Pauline? The Indians?" asked Kirke slyly.

"I don't think Indians are gay. I think they are sober as a — as a cow!" said outspoken Weezy, who had not understood Kirke's joke in the least.

"Pauline was talking about the blankets, Ducksie," said Molly, smoothing her little sister's hair. "But what makes you think that Indians are sober? You've never known any Indians."

"Oh, Molly Rowe, that isn't a *so* story. I've seen half a hundred Indians, — well, *six*, anyway."

"Where, Weezy?"

"Oh, in the streets and 'round; and in the curious store." (Weezy meant curio store.)

"Don't you remember that curious store where mamma bought the funny jugs?"

"Oh, yes, I do remember now. There *were* some Indians there with baskets to sell; and the storekeeper wouldn't buy them. Perhaps that made the Indians sober."

"Maybe they were sober because they weren't drunk," suggested Paul. "Hark! Hop Kee is blowing the conch-shell. Dinner is ready."

The dinner was a charming woodland meal, served in the open air, on a long table decked with ferns and fragrant bay-leaves. Captain Bradstreet sat on a bench on one side of the table between Molly and Pauline, and Weezy sat on the other side between Paul and Kirke. Mr. Rowe and Mrs. Davidson occupied chairs at opposite ends of the table.

"Brother insists on giving me a seat with a back, Mr. Rowe," remarked Mrs. Davidson

with a smile as sunny as the California weather. "He pets me, but I have known how to 'rough it' as well as anybody."

"I suppose it was a wild country when you settled on this coast, Mrs. Davidson."

"Indeed it was, Mr. Rowe," — Mrs. Davidson laughed softly, — "you can't conceive what a contrast it seemed to Philadelphia, our native city."

"Father moved out here not long after gold was first discovered in the State," said Captain Bradstreet, as Hop Kee carried around the plates of soup. "My sister was a little girl in pinafores, and I was only two years older."

"Our father was a doctor," continued Mrs. Davidson, passing the crackers; "his health had failed, and he came out here to Tuolumne county, and built an adobe house for us to live in. Do you recollect those heavy shutters, Alec, that papa used to bar every night?"

"Perfectly well, Almeda."

"O Auntie David! please tell them how you and papa used to mine the gold," cried Pauline.

"I am sure we should all like to hear the story, Mrs. Davidson," said Mr. Rowe.

"It's not much of a story, Mr. Rowe. Ours was placer mining. They did not dig deep into the earth for gold in those early days, you know. They took the gold from the surface, and used cradles."

"What did the babies do without them, Mrs. Davidson?" demanded listening Weezy.

"Oh, the miners did not use the babies' cradles, little Miss Weezy; they had cradles of their own," interrupted Captain Bradstreet, smiling, as he helped her to fricasseed rabbit.

"Each cradle," went on Mrs. Davidson, "had a tin pan in its upper part full of holes like a colander. The miners would shovel dirt into this pan, and then pour on water,

and rock the cradle. The water would wash the dirt through the holes, and leave the bits of gold behind in the pan."

"Wasn't the gold good for anything, Mrs. Davidson?" asked Weezy.

"Yes, dear," — Mrs. Davidson wiped away a smile with her napkin, — "and the miners gathered up all that was left in the pan; but gold was so plenty at that time that they did not trouble themselves to save any little pieces that might have escaped through the holes."

"That is funny," said Weezy.

"It was wasteful, wasn't it, my dear? They don't do that way nowadays. Well, every night there would be heaps of moist dirt under the cradles, — 'tailings' they called it; and after the miners had gone home to their suppers, my brother and I used to trudge along with our iron spoons to dig in it."

Molly laid down her knife and fork.

"How delightful, Mrs. Davidson! Did you find much gold?"

"Sometimes we'd find fifty cents' worth; sometimes we wouldn't find any."

"But when you did find any, Mrs. Davidson, what did you do with it?"

"We took a fancy to hoarding it in an old mustard-box, Molly."

"I wonder, Almeda, how many times we carried the battered thing to that miserable little store at the cross-roads?" interrupted Captain Bradstreet.

"*We*, Alec? It was *you* that carried the box. You used to tell me that I wasn't big enough to be trusted with it," retorted Mrs. Davidson playfully. "Nobody knows how I've grieved over that."

"I suspect I *was* rather lordly about keeping possession of the gold-dust, Almeda; but you can't say that I didn't give you your half of the candy it bought."

"No; you gave me my full share, Alec. That was not a great deal, though. Candy, like everything else, was very dear in those days."

"And I'm inclined to believe that that wretched storekeeper cheated us, Almeda," said Captain Bradstreet, removing a green leaf that had fallen into his coffee-cup. "But you haven't told the children of the watch and the sluices."

"Don't hurry me, Alec; I'm coming to the sluices. These were long wooden troughs, higher at one end than at the other. The miners used to throw earth into them, and then flood them. The water would wash away the earth, and leave the gold in the bottom of the sluices."

"It wouldn't have stayed there long if I had been around," commented Kirke, sugaring his strawberries.

"The miners swept up the gold, but they

didn't clean out the cracks" — Mrs. Davidson looked mischievously toward Mr. Rowe. "I've read that men are not very fond of cleaning out cracks."

"What little gnomes we were," said Captain Bradstreet. "I can seem to see ourselves now, Almeda, armed with case-knives, and creeping through those damp sluices. Their sides must have been nearly as high as our heads."

"I imagine I was on my hands and knees most of the time peeping for the gold."

"You could see it more quickly than I could, Almeda; but when it came to scraping it out of the corners, I think I could beat you."

"Don't forget the watch, Auntie David," prompted Pauline.

"No, dearie. Are you afraid it will run down if I linger so? Where was I?"

"Grandfather found the mustard-box, you know, auntie."

"Thank you, Pauline. Yes; your grandfather came across our treasure one day when he was hunting for mustard to make a paste for your grandmother."

"Our mother was sick that spring," explained Captain Bradstreet; "and as a nurse couldn't be obtained for love or money, father took care of mother himself, and did the cooking for all of us. We children had enough to eat and to wear, but we had very little training."

"We were as wild as two young quails, Alec, I've"—

"Mustard-box, Auntie David," interrupted Pauline.

Mrs. Davidson shook her forefinger playfully at her niece.

"When father saw the yellow dust inside the box, he knew at once that it wasn't mustard, and he questioned us about it."

"We had rather more gold than usual then,

I remember, Almeda," added Captain Bradstreet. "Probably the creek had risen, and we hadn't been able to cross over it to the store for several days."

"Very likely, Alec. Well, father said to us that if he were in our places he wouldn't spend the gold for candy. He asked us if we didn't think it would be nicer to save all the gold we could find, and have this made into a present for mother."

"And after that, Almeda, you and I used to scrape the sluices and dig among the tailings for hours together."

"Did you buy your mamma the present, Mrs. Davidson?" asked Weezy, impatient for the end of the story.

"Father bought it. He sent East for it the next spring," answered Mrs. Davidson, slipping a heavy gold chain from her neck as she rose from the table.

"It was this watch, Weezy."

The children crowded around Mrs. Davidson as she opened the hunter's case, and pointed out this inscription engraved on the inside: —

TO MOTHER

FROM ALEC AND ALMEDA,

Christmas, 1852.

"How delighted grandma must have been when you and papa gave her this," said Pauline, pressing the watch tenderly to her cheek.

"She was delighted indeed. She wore it till her last illness, and then put it into my hands as her most valued keepsake."

"Dear, pretty little grandma," sighed Pauline gently. "Oh, I did love her so!"

"I know you loved her, dearie, and grandma loved you," said Mrs. Davidson, returning the watch to her watch-pocket.

After Pauline had accompanied the others to the parlor tent, Mrs. Davidson slipped her arm around Molly's waist, and whispered, —

"Shall I tell you a great secret, Molly, — something that nobody else knows? On Pauline's eighteenth birthday I'm going to give her this watch."

"O Mrs. Davidson, I'm so glad for Pauline!"

Molly was not only glad for Pauline, but highly flattered by Auntie David's confidence in herself. When her father came to say good-by her face was still beaming.

CHAPTER IX

THE BEE–RANCH

One morning Weezy ran over to Mr. Arnesten's to play with homely little Olga and some fluffy young chickens; and the other children set off for Captain Bradstreet's bee-ranch, three miles away.

"You see, it isn't a road at all, Molly," said Pauline, as they followed the path leading from the camp; "it is only the bottom of a brook."

Molly turned up the sole of her left shoe, and carefully examined it, to Pauline's great amusement.

"Oh, there's no danger of wet feet, Miss Prudence. The path is dry all summer; but in the winter rains the floods come tearing

down from the upper canyon where we are going."

"Then how do the people get out of the canyon, Pauline?"

"There aren't any people, Molly, besides the Wassons. Mr. and Mrs. Wasson don't get out; they stay in."

"All winter? Why, Polly Bradstreet, I should think they'd be lonesome enough to die."

"Oh, the rains don't last very long at a time, Molly," said Paul, helping her over a fallen log; "and when the brook isn't too high Mr. Wasson can drive along the bed of it with Punch and Judy."

"Those mules are the *knowingest* little animals," put in Pauline enthusiastically. "Mr. Wasson can do anything with them. Once he drove them out to Santa Luzia with a load of honey, when the water was up to their knees a part of the way."

"What makes the Wassons stay in the canyon in the rainy season, Pauline?"

"To take care of the bees."

"To take care of the bees, Pauline? What do they do to them? You talk as if bees had to be fed and watered like so many cows."

"Not like cows exactly, Molly; but they do have to be fed and watered. Mr. Wasson sows alfalfa for them to make honey from when the wild sage blossoms are gone. There's Mr. Wasson now, in front of the house."

They were approaching a small cottage which stood alone on a ranch. Before the house were rows of square redwood boxes, and Mr. Wasson was bending over one of these boxes. He was thin and dark, and had long gray hair, and heavy, arched eyebrows, which reminded Molly of little birch canoes turned upside down.

"Good-morning, Mr. Wasson," said Pauline, walking up to him.

The man straightened himself with a quick jerk.

"Oh! it's the cap'n's little girl, is it? Plagued if you didn't 'most scare me out of a year's growth."

Pauline and the others laughed in concert, for Mr. Wasson was exceedingly tall.

"This is Molly Rowe," said Pauline affably; "and this is her brother Kirke. They're visiting at our camp, and Paul and I have brought them to see the ranch."

"Always pleased to have folks come, particularly young folks. — Mother," Mr. Wasson glanced over his shoulder and shouted, — "Hello, mother, here's company!"

"That's Mr. Wasson's wife; he always calls her mother," whispered Paul to Kirke, as a woman appeared at the door of the house and hastily retreated.

Mr. Wasson looked at his guests with a comical grin.

"Mother likes to fix herself up before strangers come in. Women are made that way."

"Oh! we don't want to go into the house yet, Mr. Wasson," interposed Molly with ready tact. "We want to see what you are doing to the hives."

"I'm lifting the covers, miss."

"To give the bees an airing, Mr. Wasson?"

"Yes, miss; I'm drying off the hives. We've had drenching fogs lately, and I'm afraid my bees will catch cold."

Molly looked surprised. Kirke, less on his good behavior, laughed outright.

"Who ever heard of a bee with a cold?" he said. "Do they sneeze, I wonder? You must be joking, Mr. Wasson."

"Not at all. I've lost lots of bees with chills. These covers I put on at night to

"Aren't you afraid of being stung?"

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keep out the dampness, but I take 'em off when the sun shines."

Now that the covers had been removed, the children could see that the top of each hive was made of wooden slats. Mr. Wasson pried up one of these slats to show the well-filled honeycomb attached to it.

"Tut, tut! there's a little mould here," he said, passing his finger along the cells without heeding the bees flying about them.

Molly drew back.

"Aren't you afraid of being stung, Mr. Wasson?"

"Afraid, miss? Oh, no! my bees and I are good friends."

"Weren't you ever stung, Mr. Wasson?" asked Kirke uneasily, as a bee whizzed about his ear.

"Wasn't I ever stung, sir?" — Mr. Wasson put back the comb with an odd grimace,

— "well, young man, accidents will happen. There are five hundred of these stands, and I go over them three times every spring."

"Go over them, Mr. Wasson?" repeated Molly.

"Yes, miss; I clean them, and make sure that each hive has a queen. It's no fool of a job! The year I was sick mother tended to them, and she hasn't had any hands since."

Molly opened her eyes, and glanced at Pauline.

"No hands to speak of, I mean, miss. She strained 'em, I tell her, when she strained the honey."

Mr. Wasson smiled broadly at his own jest. His smile was the only broad thing about him.

"Oh, that was too bad, Mr. Wasson," said Molly, smiling from sympathy.

"Mother's come to the door with her starched gown on," he continued facetiously. "She expects you to go in. I always do as mother says. She's brigadier-general, and I'm only a private."

"Isn't he odd, Molly?" whispered Pauline as they followed Mr. Wasson along the beaten path.

Molly squeezed Pauline's hand, and Paul and Kirke grinned.

They found Mrs. Wasson as short and plump as her husband was tall and spare. Her one straight line was her mouth, enclosed between two curving wrinkles like a dash in parentheses.

Having given the children all the chairs the house afforded, she seated herself upon the bed. Mr. Wasson sat upon the stove, which, fortunately for him, had no fire.

But the next moment he sprang up to bring his visitors water from the Mexican

olla swinging upon the porch; and this reminded Mrs. Wasson that they might be hungry, and she bustled to the "cooler," or "window cupboard," at the north for a loaf of rye bread and a plate of honey.

Molly thought she had never eaten anything nicer than those slices of bread spread with ranch butter and amber honey; but when Kirke looked longingly at a third slice, her sense of politeness took alarm, and she asked Pauline in a whisper if they ought not to go.

Pauline arose quickly.

"We've had a splendid time, Mrs. Wasson. Thank you ever so much for the luncheon."

"We always have a splendid time here," added Paul, stepping over the threshold. "What a frolic we had last summer with Mèdor! Where is that dog, Mrs. Wasson? I haven't seen him to-day."

"O Master Paul! haven't you heard? Our Mèdor is dead!" Mrs. Wasson brushed away a tear with her purple calico sleeve. "Would you like to visit his grave? It's to the left, under the weeping willow."

"Indeed we should!" cried the twins in a breath; "Mèdor was a dear old dog!"

"There never was a better," responded Mr. Wasson, leading the way. "He came to us a little puppy. We lived in 'Frisco then, on Telegraph Hill, and we've owned him ever since."

"Father says if he could spell 'able' he'd hire a poet to write Mèdor's epitaph," panted Mrs. Wasson, trying to keep up with the rest.

"I bought the willow for him at 'The Forestry,'" said Mr. Wasson, stopping beside a small square yard enclosed by a picket fence. And he pointed to a mound within, on which was marked in cobble-stones the name

Mèdor. A board served as headstone, and on this in black letters was painted: —

"MÈDOR, OUR DOG,
Died April 20th, 1896,
AGED 12 YEARS."

"If ever a dog deserved an epitaph that dog did," said Mr. Wasson seriously. "Mother wanted me to get one up myself; but, land! I couldn't. I can manage bees better than I can manage poetry."

The boys retired early that night in the tent that they shared with Captain Bradstreet. A little later, as Molly and Pauline were undressing in the end of the parlor tent shut off by the Indian blankets, Molly suddenly exclaimed, —

"O Polly, I've thought of something! Let's write an epitaph for Mèdor. Don't you believe it would please the Wassons?"

"Of course it would, Molly. It would tickle them to death."

"Comfort them, you should say, Polly. Epitaphs don't tickle."

"That depends upon the epitaph, doesn't it?" asked Pauline, yawning. "How wide open your eyes are, Molly Rowe! I'm going to tuck you into bed this minute."

Long after Pauline had floated into dreamland, Molly lay awake beside her little sister, listening to the voices of the night in the leafy canyon. She recognized the hooting of an owl; but what was that other sound, something like a laugh and a cough and a cry all in one? It made her flesh creep. She was thankful when Mrs. Davidson appeared with a lighted candle.

"O Mrs. Davidson! what is that dreadful noise?" she whispered.

"That noise, Molly? Oh, that is only the barking of the coyotes."

"Oh! do you suppose they'll get in, Mrs. Davidson?"

"In here? Why, my dear child, you couldn't *drive* them in. They're the greatest cowards in the world."

"But they act so *mad*, Mrs. Davidson."

"They have a sad habit of prowling around Mr. Arnesten's chicken-yard, Molly, but they won't harm us. Don't mind their howling. Try to go to sleep."

CHAPTER X

FIVE YOUNG POETS

YESTERDAY, to-day, and to-morrow were very much alike in the canyon, and all alike delightful to The Merry Five. The mornings being usually cool, breakfast was served in the dining-tent behind the parlor. After breakfast the boys often went with Captain Bradstreet to shoot "cotton-tail" rabbits for dinner. Sometimes the girls followed a part of the way in search of wild-flowers for their herbariums.

"I wonder if the chocolate lilies are gone by, Pauline?" said Molly on one of these quests.

"Yes, indeed, Molly; ages ago. I don't think they're very pretty, do you?"

"No, not pretty exactly; but they look so —

so sort of sensible, Pauline. They stand up prim and plain like little Quakers."

"Their clothes won't show dirt, that's one good thing," responded Pauline, scowling at a mud-stain on her skirt. "Why is it, Molly, that dirt never sticks to you?"

"O Pauline! I think it does stick to me; but it sticks to Weezy a good deal worse. Did you ever see such a child for getting soiled and torn?"

Little Miss Weezy had remained behind at the camp to nurse a newly hatched chicken presented her by Mr. Arnesten.

"What was that, Molly, about Weezy's losing her stocking?"

"Oh, we were all down on the beach, and nothing would do but Weezy and Harry must go in wading. I put Harry's shoes and stockings high and dry on the shore, and told Weezy to put hers there too. I suppose she gave them a toss, and they didn't go far

enough. Anyway, when she came out of the water, one stocking had been washed out to sea."

"How did the child get home, Molly?"

"How did Hi-diddle-dumpling-my-son-John go to bed, Polly?"

"'One stocking off and one stocking on,'" quoted Pauline gayly. "And you mean to say the poor little image had to skip away back to The Old and New half-dressed like that, Molly?"

"Yes; her gown up to her knees too! It was that navy blue with gilt braid. It shrunk after she fell into the ocean, and it can't be let down."

"Were there many people around, Molly?"

"Many? The beach was *lined* with 'tourers,' as Weezy calls them; and everybody saw that little scapegrace running by on one white leg and one black leg. Oh, it was *killing!*"

"Did Weezy care?" asked Pauline, laughing till the tears came.

"Yes, Polly; I'm happy to say that she did — for about five minutes."

"I wonder what her ladyship is up to now," said Pauline, striking into the homeward path.

"Oh, I suppose she and Olga are still petting that sick chicken."

Molly had guessed aright. She and Pauline presently surprised the two children playing hospital, in their favorite retreat under a live-oak. Dressed as a nurse, with a white kerchief pinned across her shoulders, Olga was holding the invalid chicken tenderly in her lap, while Weezy, also in a white kerchief, was trying to tempt its appetite with a preparation of Mellin's Food.

"It'll only eat the leastest bit of a mite, Molly," said Weezy in a hopeless voice; "and it won't open its little eyes."

"That must be because it is weak, Nurse," said Molly, joining in the play. "I think it needs a tonic."

"Some wine might do it good, Nurse," added Pauline.

"Oh, yes; some wine. That's what it is crying for, maybe," returned Weezy eagerly. "Please give me four teaspoonfuls for him, Pauline."

"I'm sorry to disappoint you, Nurse," answered Pauline dryly; "but the fact is we don't keep wine on tap at this inn. Wouldn't pepper-tea do as well?"

Weezy shook her head doubtfully.

"Won't pepper-tea tickle its poor little throat, Pauline, and make it cough?"

"Not if the tea is well taken before shaken, Nurse," replied Pauline solemnly.

"Please put lots of sugar in, then," said Weezy.

The pepper-tea proved so fine a remedy, that on the arrival of the boys, half an hour later, Weezy could assure them that her patient had begun to "take notice."

After dinner The Merry Five adjourned to the parlor tent to finish Mèdor's epitaph. Each one wrote something, though Weezy's share was only part of a line.

"However, there's enough of it, such as it is, and it's good enough, what there is of it," said Paul, repeating a worn-out joke.

When the four stanzas were completed, Paul copied them neatly with his small typewriter, and passed them to Molly to be admired.

"You've printed the epitaph beautifully, Paul — on cardboard too. Oh, I do hope the Wassons won't call it doggerel!"

"If it isn't doggerel, it's *real doggy*," put in Kirke, and was promptly scolded for his levity.

"We ought to take this out to the bee-ranch by to-morrow, Pauline," said Molly, reading the composition over again after peace had been restored. "You know Kirke

and Weezy and I must go back to Santa Luzia Saturday."

"I wish I didn't know it, Molly."

"And in two weeks more we shall all be at home again, Pauline. I wish we could stay away till Thanksgiving."

"Only I wouldn't miss of being at Silver Gate City on Admission Day," cried Paul, covering his type-writer. "The streets will be trimmed, and there'll be arches, and bands of music, and a procession long enough to reach around a dozen squares and tie."

"I think the street masquerade that comes off the night before Admission Day is the better fun," returned Pauline. "I like dressing up like somebody else, and wearing a mask."

"But I always know you, whatever you put on, my lady. You never can cheat me," replied Paul.

"Nor you me, Twinny dear," retorted Pauline.

When Pauline wished to tease her brother she often called him "Twinny."

"We'll see if I can't cheat you this year, though, little sister," rejoined Paul, with a sly wink at Kirke.

For as it happened the boys had already decided on their costumes for the masquerade, and that very morning they had made Auntie David promise to help in getting these up. Mr. Davidson would be detained some weeks longer in the East, and Mrs. Davidson was to go to Silver Gate City with the Bradstreets when they broke camp.

"It's always nice to have Auntie David with us," remarked Pauline the next day as The Merry Five were walking to the bee-ranch; "but this fall it will be nicer than usual, because Mrs. Cannon isn't well enough yet to come back to work, and Auntie David can teach the new housekeeper."

Kirke's brown eyes twinkled.

"Mrs. Cannon went off, did she, Pauline? That's the way with cannons; — they're always going off."

"I hope our epitaph will go off well," returned Pauline, as they drew near the beehives where Mr. Wasson was at work.

"Remember, Polly, you are the one to speak about it," whispered Molly diffidently. "You and Paul know the Wassons."

Mr. Wasson greeted them all cordially; and as soon as Mrs. Wasson had changed her dress she greeted them cordially too, and treated them to fresh buttermilk and gingerbread. This light repast ended, Pauline moved restlessly in her chair, uncertain how to begin her little speech. But little Miss Weezy presently relieved her embarrassment by saying, —

"We've brought you some beautiful poetry, Mr. Wasson; some we made all by ourselves."

"Some poetry, little girl?"

Mr. Wasson arched his eyebrows till they looked more like bows than like overturned canoes.

"Yes; it's an *epithet*, Mr. Wasson. We've written a lovely *epithet* for your dog."

With a mirthful glance toward Molly, Pauline hastened to explain; and as soon as everybody was duly serious she read aloud the stanzas. At the beginning of the second one, Weezy could not refrain from exclaiming, "I wrote that, I wrote, 'he carried the basket;'" but Pauline finished the epitaph without further interruption.

"It's elegant — just like a book," cried Mrs. Wasson, drying her eyes. "You were real kind to write it."

"You were *so*," echoed Mr. Wasson with a gratified smile at the five young poets. "Will you see me nail it up?"

"Yes, indeed, Mr. Wasson," answered

Weezy. And the children followed him to Mèdor's grave, and waited with Mrs. Wasson while the cardboard was being fastened to the wooden headstone.

Here is a copy of the epitaph :—

TRIBUTE TO A DUMB FRIEND.

The noble dog Mèdor, whose death we deplore,
Had lived and was famous for twelve years or more;
Was raised up in 'Frisco, on Telegraph Hill,
Where Mèdor, the spaniel, is spoken of still.

His eyes gleamed with knowledge; was true to the core,
He carried the basket to market or store;
The crack of the shotgun he loved to obey,
And thousands of ducks he brought home in his day.

At the bee-ranch in the canyon where romancers jog,
Poor Mèdor lies buried, that faithful old dog;
Around him wild-flowers will bloom in the spring,
And sweet trilling warblers forever will sing.

CHAPTER XI

MOLLY A HEROINE

On the following Saturday The Merry Five separated. Molly, Kirke, and Weezy went back to Santa Luzia for a fortnight, and then the Rowes and the Bradstreets returned together to Silver Gate City.

"It seems nice to be at home again after all, mamma," said Molly a few mornings after this. "I've missed my wheel dreadfully. Have you any errands to-day?"

"Oh, yes, Molly. Donald needs the frocks Mrs. Carillo has been making for him. I wish you'd ride over to her house and get them."

"May I ask Polly to go along, mamma?"

"If you like. But I can't have any 'scorch-

ing,' dear; and remember that you two girls are not to race."

"We won't race, mamma. But oh! racing is such fun! you don't know."

As Molly guided her bicycle down the steps of the veranda, there was a shadow on her brow. She could ride very well, even better than Pauline. Why need her mamma be so cautious about "scorching"?

Mrs. Rowe must have observed the shadow; for she followed Molly out upon the veranda, adding tenderly, —

"I know this, dearie, that your papa and I cannot afford to have you reckless. You are our mainstay, Molly."

"Your mainstay, mamma? Am I?"

"Indeed you are; and more than ever since papa's illness."

"Thank you, mamma." Molly looked radiant. "I'll try never to be reckless any more."

She was extremely in earnest. If anybody had told her then that in another hour she would be doing a frightfully daring thing she would not have believed it. And if anybody had told Mrs. Rowe that she herself would not blame Molly for the disobedience, Mrs. Rowe would not have believed that either.

"Can you ride up to Mrs. Carillo's with me, Polly?" Mrs. Rowe heard Molly call under the window of Pauline's room across the way.

"In two seconds, Molly." And Pauline hastened out, trundling her safety before her.

Mrs. Rowe watched the two girls spinning down the street on their wheels till they looked in the distance like two enormous spiders revolving on their own webs. Then calling Zip, who had begged to follow them, she went into the house.

All the way to the little brown cottage by the canyon, Molly and Pauline were talking

of the street masquerade now near at hand, and discussing what they should wear.

"I've a great mind to dress in light blue," said Molly; "mask, gown, stockings, and all."

"I wouldn't, Molly. You always wear blue or lavender or something of that kind. People would guess you in a minute. Why don't you wear yellow?"

"Yellow — with my red hair, Pauline!"

"Molly Rowe, your hair isn't red, and you know it! It is the most heavenly auburn!"

"Well, then, play it's auburn. Yellow won't go with auburn either."

Pauline knitted her black eyebrows.

"I have it, Molly. Pug up your tawny mane, and cover it with a Chinese handkerchief, or a turban. Oh, I'll manage it."

"You bright creature!"

"You must wear a yellow mask, Molly, and a yellow dress with broad black stripes, and" —

"And you must blossom out in lilac, Pauline, or the *babiest* kind of baby blue."

"I might be a shepherdess, Molly, and you could be a Spanish girl."

"Only you and I are to walk together," mused Molly. "Do you think it seems quite the thing for a Spanish girl to walk arm-in-arm with a shepherdess?"

"Why not, you stuck-up señorita?"

"We might. There, Pauline, let's do this! Let's you and me be the United States and Mexico."

"Or the United States and California, Molly. Wouldn't you rather be California? You'd be more sort of patriotic."

"Yes; I'd rather be California than any State — excepting Massachusetts," responded Molly loyally. "And you can be the Goddess of Liberty trailing around in the American flag."

"That's capital, Molly! I don't believe

the boys would ever suspect us of attempting anything so fine."

"Only we must take care not to mention flags, or bunting, or stars or stripes, when the boys are around."

"Yes, indeed; they'll be on the watch for the least hint," said Pauline, as she and Molly rode up to Mrs. Carillo's cottage.

"You needn't caution *me*, Molly. Hoaxing Kirke and Paul will make half the fun of the masquerade."

"But they're so awfully quick-witted, Polly, I'm afraid we can't cheat them. Have you any notion how they will be dressed themselves?"

"I caught Paul with a comic mask this morning before he had time to hide it. I fancy Auntie David is making a clown of him; but she won't tell."

"And your Auntie David is getting up Kirke's costume too. Isn't it sweet of her?"

"Oh, she likes to do such things, Molly."

"Kirke will want to be something absurd, — an Indian boy, maybe. I saw him sneak in at your side-door yesterday noon with toggery rolled up in a blanket."

"Did you, Molly? That accounts for the tittering in Paul's room about that time."

"Probably the boys were having a dress-rehearsal," returned Molly, laughing; and her face was still in a pucker when Manuel Carillo opened the door.

"You are just starting out on your newspaper route, aren't you, Manuel?" she said, observing that he had his leather bag slung across his shoulder. "Is your mother at home?"

"Yes; she's sewing on her new machine," replied Manuel, laughing in his light-hearted Spanish way.

In greeting the girls Mrs. Carillo laughed too, and proudly exhibited the new sewing-

machine which Kirke, with his own earnings, had helped her to purchase.

"You do beautiful work with it, Mrs. Carillo," said Molly politely. "Are Donald's frocks finished?"

Mrs. Carillo replied in broken English that the frocks were finished, and would the señorita pardon her for neglecting to send them home? Then, with profuse apologies, she rolled the garments into a neat parcel, and instructed Manuel to tie this under the seat of Molly's bicycle.

"Don't you think Manuel has lovely manners, Molly?" said Pauline as she and Molly whizzed away from the cottage.

"Lovely, yes. Weezy says she likes Manuel because he behaves so well."

"The little witch!" Pauline rode on several blocks without speaking, and then added, "What will Weezy wear at the street masquerade?"

The two girls were coursing side by side along Alder Street, and were about to cross Summit Avenue over the track of the electric railway. Summit Avenue led down from The Heights, and was at this point very steep.

"I don't know what she'll wear, but she has been teasing for two masks, and" —

"Mercy, Molly!" interrupted Pauline in dismay, "see Essie Hobbs! There, there! sitting right between the rails!"

"Forevermore! and the car coming!" gasped Molly, with a horrified glance up the hill. "Run, Essie, run!"

Too startled by the unexpected cry to heed the rumbling of the motor, Essie looked around blinking.

"Run, Essie; do you hear?" shouted Pauline frantically. "Run as fast as you can!"

Essie shook her stubborn little head. The sun in her eyes blinded her to the approach-

"'Stop the car!' screamed Mollie."

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ing danger, and she did not choose to run merely because she had been told to do so.

"Stop the car! stop the car!" screamed Molly, springing from her safety, and waving her arms wildly toward the motor-man.

The man began to work the brake. Till that moment he had not observed that little brown Essie was anything more than a patch of dust in the road.

"Stop the car! Oh! why don't you stop the car?" shrieked Pauline, as it still plunged on.

"He can't stop it! He can't stop it in time!" wailed Molly, darting forward.

What happened next she never afterward could recall; but somehow, in the twinkling of an eye, she had dashed in front of the bounding motor; she had caught dazed little Essie about the waist, and was dragging her off the track. Nearer and nearer down the abrupt descent thundered the terrible car.

Molly had scarcely time to leap with her living burden across the rail before the heavy wheels lumbered over the very spot where Essie had been seated.

"O Molly, Molly! how dared you?" shuddered Pauline, as the car came to a standstill a few feet farther on. "I thought you'd be crushed to pieces!"

Molly tried to reply, but seized with sudden faintness sank down in the road with her feet in the gutter. Pauline ran to the nearest house for a glass of water. When she returned with it she saw the motor-man bending over Molly, speaking vehemently.

"I believe you're the bravest girl in this city," he was saying in a tremulous voice. "If it hadn't been for you I should have run over that baby. You've done me a good turn that I sha'n't forget in a hurry."

"Oh, I — I *had* to do it," gasped Molly through her chattering teeth. "I — I wasn't

brave. I did it — just — because I couldn't help it."

"You're a heroine, Molly, an out-and-out heroine," cried admiring Pauline, holding the glass to Molly's lips.

After the motorman had again mounted his platform, and the crowd gathered about the corner had dispersed, Pauline picked up Molly's overturned bicycle. Donald's frocks, broken from their paper wrapping, lay crushed in the mud.

"I'll carry 'em 'ome for you, Molly," said Harry, who had come in quest of his runaway sister; "I'll 'old 'em in both harms."

And the little English children skipped away, serenely unconscious that Essie had escaped a great peril.

But when their Aunt Ruth had heard the adventure, she ran over to Mr. Rowe's house with streaming eyes to thank Molly for her noble act.

"I shall be grateful to you, Miss Molly, while the Lord lets me draw breath," she cried brokenly. "You've snatched my little Hessie back from the grave."

"Molly risked her own life for the child's, Miss Hobbs," said Mr. Rowe, stroking Molly's cheek.

His hand shook like an aspen leaf. The recent exciting incident had unbraced his nerves, and he was days in rallying from it.

"It is too bad about those frocks, mamma," said Molly that night before going to bed. "The street had just been sprinkled. They'll all have to be washed."

"What of that, Molly? Soiled frocks seem of very little consequence to me to-night."

As Mrs. Rowe spoke she knelt beside Molly's bed, and gave her a fond kiss.

"Only the clothes were new, mamma."

"Who cares for new clothes compared to human lives, my Molly?" Mrs. Rowe's voice

was unsteady. "I thank the good Father on my knees for letting you save Essie, and for sparing our dear daughter to her father and me."

And she kissed Molly again and again.

CHAPTER XII

THE STREET MASQUERADE

It was the evening before Admission Day. Silver Gate City wore its gala dress in honor of the approaching 9th of September, the anniversary of the birth of the State of California.

Arches draped with flags spanned the street corners; streamers of red, orange, and green floated from trolley and telegraph wires; palm-branches and festoons of bunting decked the fronts of houses and shops. To-morrow the city was to be serious and grand with orations and bands of music, but to-night it was on tiptoe for a frolic.

Directly after tea Molly and Pauline retired to Molly's room to prepare for the street mas-

querade. Kirke and Paul were arraying themselves in Paul's room across the way, roaring and clapping at intervals with such gusto that Captain Bradstreet, in the library beneath, chuckled from sympathy.

The captain was to pose at the festival as General Washington, and had already donned a long military coat, black stockings, and knee-breeches of velvet.

"Unless our ears deceive us, Patsy, those young people are in pretty fair spirits," he said, with a courtly bow to Mrs. Davidson, who stood at his elbow dressed like Martha Washington.

She wore an old-fashioned brocade gown, with her powdered hair rolled back from her forehead over a cushion.

"The same thought has occurred to myself, General," she replied archly, as she arranged the white ruffles at his wrists. "They are bent on mystifying their sisters to-night,

and are highly pleased with the costumes selected."

"That is evident, madam. Are you the only one in the secret?"

"The only one besides Mrs. Rowe. The boys want to mingle in the crowd before giving you an opportunity to recognize them. Shall we go on?"

The false father of his country bowed assent, and reached for his three-cornered hat.

"Since it is your will, madam, we will depart forthwith."

The Revolutionary pair had secured reserved seats in a sun parlor overlooking the plaza, and Mr. and Mrs. Rowe occupied chairs near them. Mrs. Rowe wore a black silk dress, and had thrown over her head a lace mantilla. Mr. Rowe sported a Spanish hat and cloak.

"Papa plays he's a Spanish man, Auntie David, so he won't get cold," explained pink-robed Weezy.

Little Miss Weezy had known Mrs. Davidson and Captain Bradstreet at first sight, because Pauline had described the garments in which they would appear.

"Your papa is a very sensible man, little queen of the fairies," returned the make-believe Lady Washington; and she stooped to bend in shape the wire taste in Weezy's drooping left wing.

"Now I'm going to see if I can tell Kirke and Mollie in their play clothes," said her dainty majesty, with a touch of her wand on General Washington's shoulder,

The general smiled upon her as she flitted away like a roseate cloud.

Through her pink silk mask, she observed many wonders in the street outside, and presently, she danced back to her mother, crying,—

"Look, look, mamma! There are Pauline and Mollie! White dresses on; sunbonnets too."

The masked faces beneath the white sunbonnets turned in the direction of Weezy's voice, but the white figures moved forward without halting.

"They're just *a-funning*, mamma. It *was* Pauline and Molly, now truly."

"It seems to me that the taller one is too tall for my Pauline, and the shorter one is too short for your Molly, señora," said General George Washington Bradstreet, following with his eye the simply arrayed couple.

Turning neither to the right nor to the left, they walked on, arm-in-arm, under the brilliant arc light, while the fairy queen's mamma smiled behind her black mask. Of all in the sun parlor, she and Lady Washington alone knew how Pauline and Molly were to be dressed.

Weezy grew impatient.

"Say, mamma, please. Wasn't it Pauline and Molly?"

"I mustn't tell you, little queeny."

"Oh, dear! I hate that ugly thing over your face, mamma. You don't look like my pretty mamma. You look like some other little girl's mamma."

"Do I?" Mrs. Rowe laughed. "And you look to me, fairy queen, like some other mamma's little girl."

"I hope Kirke won't guess I'm his onty donty sister, mamma. Where is Kirke, I'd like to know."

The longer Weezy watched the comers and goers, the more bewildered she grew. Here stalked a tall man in a white sheet, his face muffled in a pillow-case; and next him Weezy spied a yellow pumpkin marching on two feet. At least it appeared to be a pumpkin, only Weezy had never before beheld any pumpkin that had a boy's head in place of a stem.

"O mamma, see! There's a little girl looks just like a tulip! And there's a little boy —

O mamma, mamma, *do* see him! He's all black and part yellow like a big *sting-y* bumblebee!"

Weezy hopped up and down too excited to keep still.

"I expect any minute to see her fly into the air on those gauze wings of hers," remarked General Washington. And of course he meant what he said, for George Washington never told a lie.

"Don't be uneasy about her, General," responded the pretended Spanish lady playfully. "She won't flutter far from the earth while these strange sights are to be witnessed."

To and fro past the sun parlor trooped monks with cowls, and nuns with rosaries; men dressed in gunny-sacks, and women dressed in newspapers. All wore masks. Weezy saw pretty masks and hideous masks; masks of pigs' faces, of pug-dogs' faces, of negro, Chinese, and tattoed Indian faces. In

every direction the square was a moving mass of varied color. To look through the window was like looking through a slowly whirling kaleidoscope.

"Now those white girls are coming back, mamma," called Weezy. "And here's an old, old woman with a queer hat on, and she's got a dog."

"That woman must be Old Mother Hubbard, Weezy."

"And, O mamma! can you see? There's somebody with a striped dress on. It's red and white; blue too. It looks like Fourth of July."

Her mamma preserved a discreet silence.

"And, oh, please, mamma, see that other somebody with her! Her clothes are all red and orange and green."

The "somebodies" were Pauline and Molly, and they were laughing under their breath to hear Weezy talk about them in this high key.

"They'll never guess me in this black wig, Pauline," whispered Molly, taking long steps to disguise her gait.

"Nor me in this blond one, unless Paul does," returned Pauline. "Isn't it strange that we haven't found him and Kirke yet?"

"Very. I've taken particular notice of all the clowns and Indians, Miss Stars-and-Stripes. They don't any of them seem like our boys."

"I'm wondering, Miss Gold-State, if Paul didn't give me a glimpse of that comic mask on purpose to fool me."

Here Old Mother Hubbard turned aside to join Mother Goose, and this brought United-States Pauline and California Molly next the two "white girls."

"It would be just like him, Miss Stars-and-Stripes."

"I don't see any fun in dressing up in sunbonnets," remarked Pauline of her neighbors in front. "It's no disguise at all."

"No," returned Molly. "We can wear sunbonnets any day."

The white maskers quickened their pace.

"Hush, Molly! I'm afraid those girls have overheard every word we've said," said Pauline, pulling down her blue liberty cap. "See them shake. They're laughing at us."

"If they're laughing we haven't hurt their feelings, Pauline, so I don't care."

Had not Molly's ears been partially covered by her wig she might have heard a faint titter from under the nearest sunbonnet.

"I think those must be country girls, Molly; don't you? They kick out the hems of their gowns every step they take."

"You ought to give them lessons in Delsarte, Pauline."

Molly and Pauline had again come around to the enclosed balcony, where Weezy stood at an open window gazing out.

"The little fairy queen hasn't the least

idea who we are," whispered Pauline triumphantly; "nobody has but your mother. Take longer steps, Miss California, or your papa will know you by the way you walk."

"And your papa'll know you, Miss Liberty Cap, by the way you swing your arms."

"No, he sha'n't. I'll hold them as stiff as Indian clubs."

"That's a dear; and I'll march like a colonel. You needn't be afraid of my giving us away, Polly."

"Unless you spoil everything by giggling, Miss California. You're *such* a girl to giggle!"

Pauline was giggling herself, but so softly that no one in the sun parlor was the wiser; no, not even Lady Washington, who sat only a few feet from the pavement.

"What makes them press back upon us so?" said Molly, suddenly stopped by the crowd in front. "Stretch your neck, Miss Stars-and-Stripes."

"That inquisitive little dog."

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Pauline had the advantage of Molly in being the taller.

"Oh, oh, Mother Goose has lost her goose! No — yes — no — she's caught it! What a scramble! Why, Molly, Mother Goose must be a boy! Who knows but it's Paul?"

"Or Kirke, Pauline!"

People began to move on again. When the crush was over, the girls found themselves once more beside the white sunbonnets. The wearers of the bonnets bowed in a friendly fashion, and one of them — it was the shorter — handed Pauline a bunch of carnations.

Pauline murmured her thanks, and whispered to Molly that she thought she had met that girl before — perhaps at La Jolla.

How much longer the pleasant farce might have gone on but for Zip cannot be told, for at this point that inquisitive little dog appeared upon the scene to find out what Molly and Kirke were doing. Barking and whining, he

frisked about Molly, "saluting the flag" as Pauline said; and after that performance of what use was it for Molly to pretend that she was *not* Molly?

And as if he had not already done mischief enough, Zip next charged at the girl who had given Pauline the pinks, and the girl's mask dropped down, and everybody saw that the supposed maiden was Kirke Rowe.

Weezy almost laughed her wings off at the sight, while General Washington and the "Spanish man" openly applauded.

"To think," said the amused general, "that those children should have kept their secret the whole evening, and that after all it should have been the dog that let the cat out of the bag!"

But the cat was out, and thus ended the farce for our masqueraders.

The evening had been a delight, and we will leave the happy children laughing and com-

plimenting one another on the extraordinary shrewdness they had displayed in disguising themselves. We may meet them again in a year and a day; who knows where? Possibly in the City of the Silver Gate, possibly in Europe. But wherever it may be, The Merry Five will not appear again with masks on their faces.

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